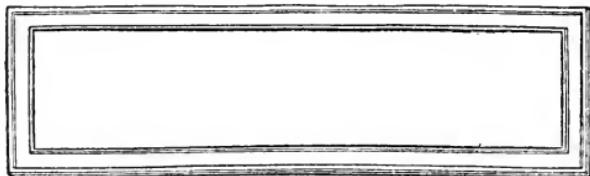


1707-68



5213

Case R
Sharp, William

6-13-47
N
G. Bertrand
Thompson

Songs and Poems, Old and
(Fiona MacLeod, pseud.)

New
London Stock 1909

M328468

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2008 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

SONGS AND POEMS

SONGS AND POEMS OLD AND NEW

BY
WILLIAM SHARP
(FIONA MACLEOD)

“To see things in their beauty is to see them in
their truth.”—FIONA MACLEOD

LONDON
ELLIOT STOCK, 62, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

1909

TO
BYRES MOIR, M.D.
FRIEND
AND
PHYSICIAN
OF MANY YEARS

“I will make poems of materials, for I think they are to
be the most spiritual poems;
And I will make the poems of the body and of mortality,
For I think I shall then supply myself with the poems
of the soul, and of immortality.”

WALT WHITMAN.

“The hours when the mind is absorbed by beauty are the
only hours when we really live, so that the longer we can
stay among these things, so much the more is snatched from
inevitable time.”

RICHARD JEFFERIES.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
Song (1879)	3
From THE HUMAN INHERITANCE (1882)	
Childhood's Inheritance	7
Young Love	15
Motherhood	17
SONNETS (1882-1886)	
Spring Wind	33
A Midsummer Hour	34
To D. G. Rossetti. I.	35
To D. G. Rossetti. II.	36
Pain	37
From EARTH'S VOICES (1884)	
Madonna Natura	41
During Music	43
Shadowed Souls	45
The Song of the Thrush	48

CONTENTS

	PAGE
From EARTH'S VOICES (1884)—<i>continued</i>	
Song	50
Sleep	51
Mater Dolorosa	52
A Record	53
TRANSCRIPTS FROM NATURE (1882-1886)	
Wild Roses	67
The Ebbing Tide	67
Dawn amid Scotch Firs	68
A Dead Calm and Mist	68
Tangled Sunrays	69
Loch Coruisk (Skye)	69
Sunrise above broad Wheatfields	70
Phosphorescent Sea	70
A Green Wave	71
Mid-noon in January	71
The Wasp	72
An Autumnal Evening	72
A Winter Hedgerow	73
The Rookery at Sunrise	73
Moonrise	74
Fireflies	74
The Crescent Moon	75

CONTENTS

	PAGE
TRANSCRIPTS FROM NATURE (1882-1886)— <i>continued</i>	
The Eagle	75
A Venetian Sunset: Before a Change	76
Empire (Persepolis)	76
From ROMANTIC BALLADS (1888)	
The Weird of Michael Scott	79
The Twin-Soul	91
The Isle of Lost Dreams	92
The Death-Child	93
The Coves of Crail	95
From SOSPIRI DI ROMA (1891)	
Prelude	99
Susurro	101
Clouds	102
Red Poppies	104
The White Peacock	106
The Swimmer of Nemi	109
Al Far della Notte	111
Thistledown	113
The Mandolin	116
Bat-Wings	121
The Wild Marc	122

CONTENTS

	PAGE
From <i>SOSPIRI DI ROMA</i> (1891)— <i>continued</i>	
Scirocco	124
The Wind at Fidenae	127
In July	129
De Profundis	131
Ultimo Sospiro	133

POEMS (1889-1893)

Oceanus	137
A Paris Nocturne	142
Robert Browning	144
The Man and the Centaur	150
Dionysos in India—a Fragment	152

SONNETS (1893)

Sonnet-Sequence—I.—VIII.	161
An Untold Story—I. and II.	169
The Veils of Silence	171
Written by the Sea	172
The Menace of Autumn	173
Aftermath	174
Flora in January	175

CONTENTS

	<small>PAGE</small>
POEMS (1893-1905)	
The Coming of Love	179
From Oversea	181
The White Flowers of January	182
The Lute Player	183
White Violets	184
The Sun Lord	185
The Summer Woman	186
Sycamores in Bloom	187
The Norland Wind	188
Spring's Advent	189
The Summer Wind	191
The Hill Water	192
Rainbow Shimmer	195
The Yellowhammer's Song	197
Vesper	199
The Song of the Sea-Wind	200
The Ballad of the Ram	202
Cap'n Goldsack	204
A Cavalry Catch	206
Spanish Roses	207
The Sea-born Vine	209
Venilia	212
On a Nightingale in April	213

CONTENTS

	PAGE
POEMS (1893-1905)— <i>continued</i>	
The Dirge of the Republic	214
Into the Silence	216
The Hill-Road to Ardmore	217
White Rose	218
Echoes of Joy	219
When the Greenness is Come Again.	220
A Hazard of Love	221
The Honeymoon Rose	222
It happened in May	223
Nightingale Lane	224
Blossom of Snow	225
The Dandelion	226
The Dream-Wind	227
Triad	228
<i>In Memoriam</i>	228
BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE	229

B

“Praised be the fathomless universe
For life and joy . . . and love, sweet love.”

SONG

LOVE came in at the door one day,
To stay ;

But I told him I wished for no such guest,
But that he might wait for a little and rest,
That day.

Love sat down on the cottage stool,
So cool ;
I told him he must not watch me so,
But he only laughed till my face was aglow,
Poor fool !

Love came in at the door that day
In May—
Came in with the scent of the flowering beans ;
He's not gone yet, and I think he means
To stay !

1879.

FROM
THE HUMAN INHERITANCE
1882

CHILDHOOD'S INHERITANCE

I

BENEATH the blue vault of a summer sky,
Where little clouds with white wings strove to fly
Far from the burning noon, leagues long there lay
Wide heather moors that stretched till far away
Northward faint hills arose and southward rolled
The ocean gleaming with sun-litten gold.

II

And 'mid a great swell of the purple waste
Close to the sea, a rock, which no hand placed
Thus lonely and afar but which was hurled
A meteor from some ruin'd starry world,
Rose dark and frowning, with its hoar sides scarred
By winter tempests and the fiercely hard
Gripe of the death-frosts that from northland heights
Steal silent through grim January nights,
And traced with furrows by the many tears
Of rainy autumns thro' unnumbered years.

III

The purple moorland waste alone stretched wide
Beneath the sun—no thing was seen beside

CHILDHOOD'S INHERITANCE

To break the long still sweep that met the sky,
No mounds of rocks confusedly piled high,
No single tree with clear boughs limned in black
Against the blue, no white and dusty track,
But only miles and miles and miles that swept
Purple to where the leagueless waters leapt.
The old rock stood forth like an ancient throne
Great tho' forgotten, where the winds alone
Paid homage, fair in the sunshine of the day,
Solemn by night with phosphorescent grey.

IV

Around, the honey-laden bees humm'd loud
With summer gladness ; in a mazy cloud
Whirling the grey gnats rose and wheeled and
spun
Swift golden notes within the golden sun ;
And bright with all their royal emblazonries
Flashed like swift darts of fire great dragonflies.
Away across the glowing moors there rang
The lapwing's wild complaint, and far off sang
Hidden in blue a small rejoicing lark
Singing against some unseen yearn'd for mark :
About the heath the yellowhammer's cry
Piped sweet and clear, and often suddenly,
With joyous chirps and jerks, the stonechat flew
From spray to spray, and, darting flame-like through
The scented heather spires to where beneath
The ants had silent kingdoms in the heath,
The green-grey black-eyed lizard flashing shot
So swift the hawk on poised wings saw it not.

CHILDHOOD'S INHERITANCE

V

O'er all the deep skies arch'd, a wondrous space
Of ardent azure while the sun had place,
That changed to dark, deep depths when twilight
grey

Dreamt into night dark'ning to one vast shade
Of purple-black, when lamplike star by star
Sparkled or shone or pulsing flamed afar.
Silence save for each blent and natural sound
Of earth and air — where sea-caves made the
ground,

By tidal waves of ages undermined,
Groan as in travail—when the trumpet wind
All uncheck'd blew—or swelled the incessant cries
Of tossed waves in their breaking agonies.

VI

Upon the summit of the ancient stone
(Whose birth was in Time's youth), and all alone,
Sat silent, tranced, and motionless a child,
Like some sweet flow'r chance nurtured in the
wild,
Sat watching seabirds, with his eager eyes
Full of the deep blue of the vaulted skies.
A child, for he indeed was little more ;
A child at heart, such as whom make the door
Of heaven seem open'd here—to whom the seas
Breaking in foam, and scattered spray-swept trees
With long arms wrestling, and the winds on
wings
Invisible were wondrous living things.

CHILDHOOD'S INHERITANCE

VII

A flower, for his wind-kissed locks unshorn
Shone yellow as gold daffodils at morn ;
His eyes were blue as in the golden grain
Windflow'rs are blue, and soft as after rain
Violets that under dripping leaves have lain,
And tender as a dappled fawn's that yearn
For pity when the shrew-mice from the fern
Shake down the dew-drops ; neath his sunlit hair
As early morning, his sweet face was fair
Beneath the sun-brown—as a white bud rose
That flushes faintly while the June sun glows.
And even as he gazed there deeper grew
Within his eyes a holier softer blue,
Where some thought brooded in their sacred
shade ;
It seemed almost as if some song were laid
Asleep upon his face that yet would find
Some perfect utterance for the echoing wind
To carry to the birds ; in reverie
Raptured he saw what these could never see.

VIII

Oh blessed time, when all God's world is fair
And to the soul not foreign ! When the bare
Wide cruel wastes of death-encumber'd sea
Seem as the voice of God that thunderingly
Beats round the recreant earth ; when morning
seems
The revelation of one's utmost dreams

CHILDHOOD'S INHERITANCE

Of beauty ; when the slow death of the day
Makes all the west one glorious crimson way
For happy souls that die ; and when the moon,
Wheeling her radiant orb thro' the dark noon
Of night, with conscious splendour makes the seas
Unutterably solemn, and great trees
Lost in the shadow stand forth with huge limbs
Ghastly and clear ; when bird-songs are all hymns
Of joy and praise, and every wilding flower
Is known and loved ; and when each pent up hour
Seems worse than wasted to the eager heart,
That fain would hear the thrush-wings strike apart
The beech leaves in short flight ere full and clear
Burst the sweet tide of song, or watch the deer
Stand with great eyes amid the fern, or high
Hearken the cuckoo's music fill the sky.

IX

He seemed content just silently to sit
And watch the breaking waves, the swallows flit
Like arrows through the air, save when along
The summer wind swept bearing the sweet song
Of happy larks, or the repeated cries
Of plovers when they caught the hawk's keen eyes
Fixt on their young—and then he seem'd to be
All sight and ear, as yearning tearfully
To beat with spirit pinions that fine air
Where at the gates of heaven exceeding fair
The bird-songs rose and fell like silver tides,
Or else to be as that royal bird that prides
Itself on flinching not before the sun

CHILDHOOD'S INHERITANCE

But stares undaunted, so he might have spun
Downward with death upon the fierce pois's hawk,
Saving the moorland brood : not man or boy
Seem'd he so much as some incarnate joy
At one with all things fair, flow'r o' the sod
And insect to the Loveliness call'd God.

X

As a red rose that in full bloom doth spread
Her soft flushed bosom to the wind ere dead
'Mid fallen leaves her queenliness is gone,
So the fair westering day in glory shone
Heedless of coming night though night was nigh.
The sunset burned afar ; the holy sky
Seem'd filled with heavenly forms mail'd in clear
gold,
Guiding their purple rafts through seas that rolled
Immeasurably far off in crimson fire.
The sea lay tranced watching the day expire,
And tired waves rose and fell as though each
pray'r
Of rest long sought were granted. Everywhere
God's blessing brooded. And at last the day,
With one long earthward smile, dissolved away,
Veiling her head in twilight robes wherethrough
The palpitating stars shone faint and few.

XI

From out the darkening vault where they had hid
Through sweltering heats of noon, swiftly there slid
Star after star, each swimming from the near

CHILDHOOD'S INHERITANCE

Dark blue of heaven as from a windless mere
Rise in calm morning twilights white and clear
Young lily buds that open golden eyes
Which joy makes wider when the day doth rise.

XII

Far inland, with an oft-repeated cry
The curlew wailed, and swelled mysteriously
Hoarse sounds from the dim sea. The boy's face
grew

White in the dusky shade as swiftly flew
A great gull close by him, like a ghost
Haunting the desolate margins of the coast :
Great moths came out, with myriad sharded wings
Huge beetles droned, and other twilight things
Hummed their dim lives away, and through the air
The flittermice wheeled whistling : while the glare
Of summer lightnings flashing furtively
Blazed for moment o'er the sleeping sea.

XIII

At last, with a long sigh, he turn'd and slid
From the old rock, and for a little hid
His face amongst the heather-spires that shook
With cool sweet dews : then one last lingering
look

Across the twilight seas, whereo'er the moon
Within her crescent shallop would sail soon,
When with swift steps he turn'd and westward
fled

CHILDHOOD'S INHERITANCE

Across the moor by a little path that led,
Almost unseen save known, till suddenly,
Screened from the vision of the neighbouring sea
Low in a dip between two moorland mounds
A cottage lay ; whereto with rapid bounds
He sped, and, bearing with him odours of salt
foam,
Entered the little doorway of his home.

YOUNG LOVE

ON a flower in a forest,
A lily-bosom'd flower,
(Where never windy tempest
Came, nor ever any shower)—
A golden hour of birthtide,
(The sky was blue, so blue !)
Left me lying 'mid a songtide
Of birds of every hue.

Upon the white flower swaying
I laughed and sang in glee,
Till the thrushes long delaying
Sang back deliciously ;
And the dear white cloudlets sleeping
Up in the blue, blue sky,
Seem'd downy cherubs peeping
Between the pine boughs high.

A little wind came blowing
And sang a wild-wood song,
It whispered of the flowing
Of bubbling streams along ;

YOUNG LOVE

I laughed, and stood, and rising
 Found I had two small wings—
So then I flew rejoicing
 Toward the water-springs.

And ever 'mid my flying,
 (A little cloud I seem'd !)
I heard a great deep sighing,
 As earth in trouble dream'd ;
And when I reached the river
 The sound more windlike blew :
The glad stream lisped "for ever,"
 But the sighing grew and grew.

And as I laughed and wonder'd
 Among the flowers and grass,
All suddenly it thunder'd,
 The sunlight seem'd to pass :
A great wind took and blew me
 Across a grey wet sand,
And tho' I wept it threw me
 Far from the joyous land.

And now the salt waves leaping
 Pursue with hungry springs,
And baffled, blind, and weeping,
 I beat my draggled wings :
This was the great deep sighing
 I heard when I was young—
And now, wind-weary, dying,
 My last sob-note is sung !

MOTHERHOOD

I

BENEATH the awful full-orb'd moon
The silent tracts of wild-rice lay
Dumb since the fervid heat of noon
Beat through the burning Indian day ;
And still as some far tropic sea
Where no winds murmur, no waves be.

The bending seeded tops alone
Swayed in the sleepy sultry wind,
Which came and went with frequent moan
As though some dying place to find ;
While at sharp intervals there rang
The fierce cicala's piercing clang.

Deep 'mid the rice-field's green-hued gloom
A tigress lay with birth-throes ta'en ;
Her serpent tail swept o'er her womb
As if to sweep away the pain
That clutched her by the gold-barred thighs
And shook her throat with snarling cries.

MOTHERHOOD

Her white teeth tore the wild-rice stems ;
And as she moaned her green eyes grew
Lurid like shining baleful gems
With fires volcanic lighten'd through,
While froth fell from her churning jaws
Upon her skin-drawn gleaming claws.

As in a dream at some strange sound
The soul doth seem to freeze, so she
Lay fixed like marble on the ground,
Changed in a moment : suddenly,
A far-off roar of savage might
Boomed through the silent sultry night.

Her eyes grew large and flamed with fire ;
Her body seem'd to feel the sound
And thrill therewith, as thrills a lyre
When wild wind wakes it with a bound
And sweeps its string-clasp'd soul along
In waves of melancholy song.

Her answering howl swept back again
And eddied to her far mate's ear ;
Then once again the travail-pain
Beat at the heart that knew no fear,
But some new instinct seem'd to rise
And yearn and wonder in her eyes.

Did presage of the coming birth
Light up her life with mother-love,

MOTHERHOOD

As winds along the morning earth
Whisper of golden dawn above ?
Or was it but some sweet wild thought
Remember'd vaguely ere forgot ?

Some sweet wild thought of that still night
When underneath the low-lying moon,
Vast, awful, in its splendour white,
Two tigers fought for love's last boon :
Two striped and fire-eyed terrors strove
Through blood and foam to reach her love.

Of how their fight so deathly still
Fill'd all her heart with savage glee ;
The lust to love, to slay, to kill,—
The fierce desire with him to be
Whose fangs all bloody from the fray
Should turn triumphantly away :

Of how at last with one wild cry
One gript the other's throat and breath,
And, with hell gleaming thro' each eye,
Shook the wild life to loveless death ;
Then stood with waving tail and ire
Triumphant changed to swift desire ?

But once again the bitter strife
Of wrestling sinews shook her there ;
And soon a little mewling life
Met her bewilder'd yearning stare,
Till, through her pain, the tigress strove
With licking tongue her love to prove.

MOTHERHOOD

No longer fearless flamed the light
Of great green eyes straight thro' the
gloom,
Each nerve seem'd laden with affright,
The eyes expectant of some doom ;
The very moonlight's steady glare
Beat hungrily about her lair.

A beetle rose, and hummed, and hung
A moment ere it fled—but great
In face of peril to her young
The tigress rose supreme in hate
And, with tail switching and lips drawn,
The unreal foe scowled out upon.

And when a mighty cobra, coiled
Amid the tangled grass-roots near,
Hissed out his hunger, her blood boiled
With rage that left no room for fear,
Till, with a howl that shook the dark,
She sprang and left him cold and stark.

But when a feeble hungry wail
Smote on her yearning ears she turn'd
With velvet paws and refluent tail
And eyes that no more flashed and burn'd,
But flamed throughout the solemn night
Like lamps of soft sweet yellow light

To where her young was ; where she lay
Silent, and full of some strange love

MOTHERHOOD

Long hours. Along the star-strewn way
A comet flashed and flamed above,
And where great wastes of solemn blue
Spread starless sailed the vast moon through.

No sound disturb'd the tigress, save
Stray jackals, or some wild boar's pant
Where thickest did the tall rice wave,
Or trump of distant elephant ;
Or, when these fill'd the night no more,
The tiger's deep tremendous roar.

II

Vast, solitary, gloomful, dark,
Primeval forests swept away
To where the gum and stringy bark
Against great granite mountains lay ;
And through their depths the twilight stole
And dusk'd still deeper each dark bole.

Deep in their pathless tracks there reared
A huge white gum, whose giant height
When winds infrequent blew appeared
To brush the stars out from the night :
A mighty column, straight and vast,
Solemn with immemorial past :

And at its base upon a bed
Of fern-tree leaves strewn o'er the ground

MOTHERHOOD

A woman lay as though lying dead—
Dark, rigid, still, without one sound :
Her fixed eyes lifted not, nor saw
The great stars tremble in strange awe.

Couch'd near upon the tufted grass
Two wither'd, long-haired women bent
Two dusky bodies. No sign was
Made ever them between, nor went
From swift, slant, startled eyes a glance
To break the spell of their deep trance.

They crouch'd with heads bent down
between
Thin, black, uprisen knees ; their hair
Hid their dark faces like a screen,
And, scored with thorns, their feet lay
bare :
Hour after hour had watched them so,
Three shadows fixt in sphinx-like woe.

At times some wand'ring parrot's voice
Clanged through the dusk ; from dead
trees nigh
A locust whirred its deafening noise
And shrilled th' opossum's frequent cry :
And hour by hour some slim snake stole
Hissing from fallen rotting bole.

At last, above the farthest range
The full vast moon sail'd o'er the trees :

MOTHERHOOD

The dead-like woman felt some change
 Thrill thro' her body ; from her knees
Each shadow-watcher raised her head,
And stared with eyes of moveless dread.

Beyond—within the ghastly shade
 Of time-forgotten gums aglow
With phosphorescent light that made
 Each trunk burn taper-like—bent low,
A savage, bearded and long-haired,
Wild-eyed across the pale gloom stared :

And when his shifting, restless eyes
 Caught the drawn woman's birthtime pang,
He shrilled a wild yell to the skies
 And high with tossing arms upsprang
Beating with eager blows a drum
And shivering with some terror dumb :

The list'ning women once again
 Shudder'd and grew more chill with fear—
Not at the harsh drum's maddening strain
 But at the spirits that were near,
The awful souls of hated dead
That creep round each wild travail-bed ;

The white-eyed sheeted things that steal
 Down dusky ways, and lie in wait
And from the shade their death-darts wheel
 And wreak unseen their deathless hate :
For these the fierce drum clanged and beat
The summons of a swift retreat.

MOTHERHOOD

What strange thoughts wander'd thro' the
mind

Of her who writhed in travail sore ?
As, bearing scents and sounds, a wind
Blows pregnant from some distant shore,
So may have blown some wind of thought
Memorious from a past forgot,

Drifting across her yearning eyes
Stray visions of lost happy days,
And filling with strange vague surprise
The dreary sameness of her gaze—
Dim, sweet memorial hours long lost,
Scorched by long suns, numbed by long frost.

But soon the wafted breaths that blew
From off the deep drown'd past were blown
Aside before some sharp wind new
Of sudden agony. A moan
Shook on her lips, and from her womb
A new life crept to outer gloom.

The watching women rose and went
With deft hands unto her : the man
Hush'd his tempestuous instrument,
And with fleet silent footsteps ran
To where, asleep in moonlight, lay
Some huts rough built from branches stray :

And soon thereafter, in the light
Of the vast moon, the tribe stole out

MOTHERHOOD

And fill'd with cries the startled night—

Till, with claspt hands and one wild shout,
They circled round the riven frame
Of her whose blank eyes knew no shame.

But as some feeble strength came back

She stretched out thin and claw-like hands,
With eyes as one who on a rack

Yearns for mercy, or on strange lands
Lifts outspread arms towards his own—
So yearn'd she, with a mother's moan.

Within her famish'd eyes no more

The hunger of the body burned,

But on the fruit her womb long bore

Their light unspeakable was turned :
And all the hunger of her love
Lighten'd the child's eyes from above.

Vast, solitary, gloomful, dark,

Primeval forests swept away

To where the gum and stringy bark

Against the granite mountains lay :

Till, as the great moon grew more wan,
Stirred the first heart-beats of the dawn.

And o'er the pathless tracks where reared

The huge white gum, whose boughs had seen
The woman's birth-throes, light appeared

And lit its leaves with golden green,
And shone upon the straight trunk vast,
Solemn with immemorial past.

MOTHERHOOD

III

Faint scent of lilies filled the room,
Hush'd in sweet silence and asleep
Within the dim delicious gloom:

No windy lamp-flame strove to leap
Amidst the moveless shade, but faint
A soft light burned from censer quaint.

And dimly through the gloom loomed large
A carven bed that seem'd to sail
Like ghost of some great funeral barge
'Mid shadow-seas no men might hail—
Till from its depths suffused with night
The wan sheets dreamed to gleaming white.

And lo, half-hid, like some white flow'r
Breasting the driven snow, there lay
Expectant of the awful hour
A waiting girl, who, far away
Beyond where vision reacheth, gazed
With eyes by some strange glory dazed.

Like two strange dreams they were, wherein
Played subtle lights of other life,
Deep depths, scarce cognisant of sin,
Serene, beyond all clamorous strife—
Two seas unsoundable as night
Yet lit to utmost depths with light.

Silent she lay, as one who low
In some dim vast deserted nave

MOTHERHOOD

Bends rapt in mingled love and woe

While the wild, passionate, sweeping wave
Of organ music sweeps and rolls—
The burden of all suffering souls.

Silent she lay, for as a palm

Within a thirsty desert feels
A low wind break the deathly calm
And drinks each rain-drop as it steals
Between its dry parch'd leaves, so she
Felt God's breath fill her fitfully.

The soft low wind of life divine

Entered the darkened womb, and there
It cleft the mystic bands that twine
The folded bud of childhood fair,
Which, as an open'd lily, fell
From death to life's strange miracle.

O perfect bud of human flow'r

Immaculately sweet and pure,
Shall God's first influence in this hour
Through all thy coming life endure,
And thou expand to perfect bloom
Untouched by crash of neighbouring doom ?

Or, O sweet perfect human bud,

Shall rains thee dash, and wild winds sweep
Thy fair head to the mire and mud,
And, with praying hands, thy mother weep
Such tears of anguish as no pain
Shall ever wring from her again ?

MOTHERHOOD

Soft, soft, the wind of life doth breathe :—
 Some angel surely fans the while
The faint new-litten spark beneath,
 And prayeth with a piteous smile
That it may live, and living be
A victor 'midst humanity.

Silent she lay who soon should give
 This life to life : her secret thought
Strove 'mid the happy past to live
 Again that day she ne'er forgot,
That day when her young love took wing
From maidenhood's sweet-scented spring :

When hand in hand she trod the ways
 Flow'r-strewn with him, and felt his eyes
Turn'd full on her with such deep gaze
 Of love triumphant, that the skies
Seem'd but a hollow dome where rang
Sweet tumult, as though angels sang :

How the hush'd drowsy afternoon
 Slipt through the summertide, till low
In the dark tranquil east the moon
 Rose vast and yellow, and more slow
The flaming star that lights the west
Lulled the sea-waters to their rest :

How in the bridal chamber shone
 No other than the full-moon's light,
And how between the dusk and dawn

MOTHERHOOD

A wind of passion fill'd the night
And bore resistless soul with soul
On to love's utmost crowning goal.

Silent she was, but as her mind
Made real once more that perfect day
Her body trembled, as a wind
Had blown upon her where she lay,
And in her eyes serene and deep
Joys unforgotten woke from sleep.

As on a mighty midnight sea
Wind-swept, and lit by a white glare
Where intermittent lightnings flee
And deafened by the thunderous air
Split up with tumult, one great wave
Doth rise and scorn an ocean-grave,

And, gathering volume as it rolls,
Doth sweep triumphant till at last
It thunders up the sounding shoals
Of stricken promontory aghast,
And leaves its crown of foam where high
The cliffs stare seaward steadily :

So from love's throbbing pulsing sea
All lightning-lit by passion, reared
A mighty wave resistlessly
Of mother-love, which as it neared
Fulfilment broke in one glad cry
Of sweet half-wond'ring ecstasy.

MOTHERHOOD

Hush ! the great sea is still, and low
The night-wind wanders ; hush for calm
The mother waits the body's woe.
Silent she lay ; mayhap a psalm
Of sacred joy sang deep within
The maiden heart unstained by sin.

Mayhap the inward vision saw
The unborn soul arise and stand
Great in a people's love and awe,
Crown'd not with gold by human hand
But sacred with the bays that wait
The victor in the strife of Fate :

And deeper still, beheld afar
The billows of the ages sweep
A mightier soul from star to star—
So ever upwards through the steep
Dim ways of God's unfathom'd will
But aye by fuller periods still.

So shall it be for ever : evermore
The mystic wheel of mother-love shall whirl
Around the world, and link these three again.

S O N N E T S

1882-1886



SPRING WIND

O FULL-VOICED herald of immaculate Spring,
With clarion gladness striking every tree
To answering raptures, as a resonant sea
Fills rock-bound shores with thunders echoing—
O thou, each beat of whose tempestuous wing
Shakes the long winter-sleep from hill and lea,
And rouses with loud reckless jubilant glee
The birds that have not dared as yet to sing :

O Wind that comest with prophetic cries,
Hast thou indeed beheld the face that is
The joy of poets and the glory of birds—
Spring's face itself :—hast thou 'neath bluer skies
Met the warm lips that are the gates of bliss,
And heard June's leaf-like murmur of sweet
words ?

A MIDSUMMER HOUR

THERE comes not through the o'erarching cloud
of green
A harsh, an envious sound to jar the ear :
But vaguely swells a hum, now far, now near,
Where the wild honey-bee beyond the screen
Of beech-leaves haunts the field of flowering bean.
Far, far away the low voice of the weir
Dies into silence. Hush'd now is the clear
Sweet song down-circling from the lark unseen.

Beyond me, where I lie, the shrew-mice run
A-patter where of late the streamlet's tones
Make music : on a branch a drowsy bird
Sways by the webs that midst dry pools are
spun—
Yet lives the streamlet still, for o'er flat stones
The slow lapse of the gradual wave is heard.

TO D. G. ROSSETTI

I

FROM out the darkness cometh never a sound :
No voice doth reach us from the silent place :
There is one goal beyond life's blindfold race,
For victor and for victim—burial-ground.
O friend, revered, belov'd, mayst thou have found
Beyond the shadowy gates a yearning face,
A beckoning hand to guide thee with swift pace
From the dull wave Lethean gliding round.

Hope dwelt with thee ; not Fear ; Faith, not
Despair :
But little heed thou hadst of the grave's gloom.
What though thy body lies so deeply there
Where the land throbs with tidal surge and
boom,
Thy soul doth breathe some Paradisal air
And Rest long sought thou hast where ama-
ranths bloom.

TO D. G. ROSSETTI

II

Yet even if Death indeed with pitiful sign
Bade us drink deep of some oblivious draught,
Is it not well to know, ere we have quaffed
The soul-deceiving poppied anodyne,
That not in vain erewhile we drink the wine
Of life—that not all blankly or in craft
Of evil went the days wherein we laughed
And joyed i' the sun, unknowing aught divine?

Not so thy doom, whatever fate betide :
Not so for thee, O poet-heart and true,
Who fearless watched, as evermore it grew,
The shadow of Death creep closer to thy side.—
A glory with thy ebbing life withdrew
And we inherit now its deathless Pride.

PAIN

I AM God's eldest :—I and Love are twin ;
We look for ever in the other's face ;
Together our flight wings throughout all space—
Sun, Star, Man, God, alike we dwell therein ;
Some far-off goal together strive to win.

But here on earth I leave the mightier trace,
Clasp hands more close with all the human race,
And weave the shadow-webs of joy and sin.
And most I dwell in the clear skies at dawn,
In marvellous eves when all the stars are bright,
In music e'er the sweetest chord is gone,
In woman's beauty still unsoiled and white,
In children's slumber in the morning wan,
And lovers' vows and yearnings in the night.

FROM
EARTH'S VOICES

1884

MADONNA NATURA

I LOVE and worship thee in that thy ways
Are fair, and that the glory of past days
 Haloes thy brightness with a sacred hue :
Within thine eyes are dreams of mystic things,
Within thy voice a subtler music rings

 Than ever mortal from the keen reeds drew ;
Thou weav'st a web which men have callèd Death
But Life is in the magic of thy breath.

The secret things of Earth thou knowest well ;
Thou seest the wild-bee build his narrow cell,
 The lonely eagle wing through lonely skies,
The lion on the desert roam afar,
The glow-worm glitter like a fallen star,

 The hour-lived insect as it hums and flies ;
Thou seest men like shadows come and go,
And all their endless dreams drift to and fro.

In thee is strength, endurance, wisdom, truth :
Thou art above all mortal joy and ruth,
 Thou hast the calm and silence of the night :
Mayhap thou seest what we cannot see,
Surely far off thou hear'st harmoniously
 Echoes of flawless music infinite,
Mayhap thou feelest thrilling through each sod
Beneath thy feet the very breath of God.

MADONNA NATURA

Monna Natura, fair and grand and great,
I worship thee, who art inviolate :

Through thee I reach to things beyond this span
Of mine own puny life, through thee I learn
Courage and hope, and dimly can discern

The ever noble grades awaiting man :
Madonna, unto thee I bend and pray—
Saviour, Redeemer thou, whom none can stay !

No human fanes are dedicate to thee,
But thine the temples of each tameless sea,
Each mountain-height and forest-glade and plain.
No priests with daily hymns thy praises sing,
But far and wide the wild winds chanting swing,
And dirge the sea-waves on the changeless main
While songs of birds fill all the fields and woods,
And cries of beasts the savage solitudes.

Hearken, Madonna, hearken to my cry ;
Teach me through metaphors of liberty,
Till strong and fearing nought in life or death
I feel thy sacred freedom through me thrill,
Wise, and defiant, with unquenchèd will
Unyielding, though succumb the mortal breath—
Then if I conquer, take me by the hand
And guide me onward to thy Promised Land !

DURING MUSIC

O TEARS that well up to my eyes,
And vague thoughts wandering thro' my brain,
Whence come ye? From what alien skies,
From what dim sorrow, what strange pain?

I hear old memories astir
In dusky twilights of the past:
O voices telling me of her,
My soul, whom now I know at last:

I know her not by any name,
But she with hope or fear is pale;
I see her ere this body came
From mortal womb with mortal wail.

Later and later through long years,
Through generations of dead men,
I see her in her mist of tears,
I see her in her shroud of pain.

I see her whom the æons have raised
From one dim birth to endless life;
I see her strive, regain, re-fail
Forever in the endless strife.

DURING MUSIC

I see her, soul of man, and soul
Of woman, and in many lands :
Her eyes are fixt on some far goal
But she hath neither thrall nor bands.

On one day yet to come I see
This body pale and cold and dead :
The spirit once again made free
Hovers triumphant overhead.

Again, again, O endless day,
I see her in new forms pace on,
And ever with her on the way
Fair kindred souls in unison.

O wandering thoughts within my brain,
O voices speaking low to me,
O music sweet with stingless pain,
Bring clear the vision that I see !

O ecstasy of sound, O pain !
Too sad my heart, too sad the tears
It bringeth to my eyes again,
Too strange the hopes, too strange the fears.

SHADOWED SOULS

"If the soul withdraweth from the body, what profit there
after hath a man of all the days of his life?"

SHE died indeed, but to him her breath
Was more than a light blown out by death :
He knew that they breathed the self-same air,
That not midst the dead was her pale face fair
But that she waited for him somewhere.

To some dead city, or ancient town,
Where the mould'ring towers were crumbling
down,
Or in some old mansion habited
By dust and silence and things long dead,
He knew the Shadows of Souls were led.

For years he wandered a weary way,
His eyes shone sadder, his hair grew grey :
But still he knew that she lived for whom
No grave lay waiting, no white carv'd tomb,
No earthly silence, no voiceless gloom.

SHADOWED SOULS

But once in a bitter year he came
To an old dying town with a long dead name :
That eve, as he walked thro' the dusty ways
And the echoes woke in the empty place,
He came on a Shadow face to face.

It looked, but uttered no word at all
Then beckoned him into an old dim hall :
And lo, as soon as he passed between
The pillars with age and damp mould green
His eyes were dazed by a strange wild scene.

A thousand lamps fill'd the place with light,
And fountains glimmered faerily bright ;
But never a single sound was heard,
The dreadful silence was never stirred,
Not even the breath of a single word

Came from the shadowy multitude,
More dense than leaves in a summer wood,
Than the sands where the swift tides ebb and
flow ;
But ever the Shades moved to and fro
As windless waves on the sea will go.

Then he who had come to the Shadow-land
Swift strode by many a group and band ;
But never a glimpse he caught of her,
In fleeting shadow or loiterer,
For whom the earth held no sepulchre.

SHADOWED SOULS

He knew that she was not dead whom he
So loved with bitterest memory,
To whom through anguish'd years he had prayed;
Yet came she never, no sign was made,
No touch on his haggard frame was laid.

At last to an empty room he came,
And there he saw in letters of flame :
“ This is a palace no king controls,
A place unwritten in human scrolls,—
This is the Haunt of Shadowed Souls :

“ If thy Shadow-soul be here no more,
Seek thine old life's deserted shore :
And there, mayhap, thou wilt find again,
Recovered now through sorrow and pain,
The Soul thou didst thy most to have slain.”

THE SONG OF THE THRUSH

WHEN the beech-trees are green in the wood-
lands

And the thorns are whitened with may,
And the meadow-sweet blows and the yellow
gorse blooms

I sit on a wind-waved spray,
And I sing through the livelong day
From the golden dawn till the sunset comes
and the shadows of gloaming grey.

And I sing of the joy of the woodlands,
And the fragrance of wild-wood flowers,
And the song of the trees and the hum of the
bees

In the honeysuckle bowers,
And the rustle of showers
And the voice of the west wind calling as
through glades and green branches he scours.

THE SONG OF THE THRUSH

When the sunset glows over the woodlands
More sweet rings my lyrical cry
With the pain of my yearning to be 'mid the
burning
And beautiful colours that lie
'Midst the gold of the sun-down sky,
Where over the purple and crimson and amber
the rose-pink cloud-curls fly.

Sweet, sweet swells my voice thro' the wood-
lands,
Repetitive, marvellous, rare :
And the song-birds cease singing as my music
goes ringing
And eddying echoing there,
Now wild and now debonnair,
Now fill'd with a tumult of passion that throbs
like a pulse in the hush'd warm air !

SONG

“ To suffer grief is to be strong,
And to be strong is beautiful and rare ”—
'Twas in thy court, O Love, I learned it there,
 This sad sweet song !

No one man dwells thy ways among,
Who shall not learn thy thousand ways of grief
Or how wild fears succeed each poor relief
 In dark'ning throng :

There too a man may learn to put away
The crownèd summit of his heart's desire ;
But O the bitter burning of love's fire—
 Its bitterer ashes grey !

SLEEP

WHILE sways the restless sea
 Beyond the shore,
And the waves sing listlessly
 Their secret lore,
And the soft fragrant air
 From off the deep
Scarce stirs thine outspread hair,—
 Sleep !

Far up in purple skies
 Great lamps hang out,
White flames that fall and rise
 In motley rout ;
While fall their silvern rays
 O'er crag and steep,
Woodlands and meadow-ways,—
 Sleep !

While the moon's amber gleams
 Gild rock and flow'r,
Let no untimely dreams
 Possess the hour :
Let no vague fears the heart
 'Mid slumber keep,
In dreams love hath no smart,—
 Sleep !

MATER DOLOROSA

SHE, brooding ever, dwells amidst the hills ;
 Her kingdom is call'd Solitude ; her name—
 More terrible than desolating flame—
 Is Silence ; and her soul is Pain.
Day after day some weightier sorrow fills
 Her heart, and each new hour she knows
 The birth of further woes.
 And whoso, journeying, goes
Unto the land wherein she dwells for aye
 Shall not come thence until have passed away
 For evermore the bright joy of his years.
 She giveth rest, but giveth it with tears,
 Tears that more bitter be
 Than drops of the Dead Sea :
 But never gives she peace to any soul,
 For how could she that rarest gift bestow
 Who well doth know
That though in dreams she can attain the goal,
 In dreams alone her steps can thither go :—
 Solitude, Silence, Pain, for all who live
 Within the twilit realms that are her own,
 And even Rest to those who seek her throne,
 But these her gifts alone :
 Peace hath she not and therefore cannot give.

A RECORD

(A Fragment)

I HEAR the dark tempestuous sea
Boom through the night monotonously,
The hoarse faint cry of breaking waves
Lashed by the wind that moans and raves
Upon the deep—I hear them fall
Against cliff-bases smooth and tall,
A music wild, funereal.

I seem to listen to a sound
That circles earth for ever round,
The dirge of an eternal song,
A dull deep music swept along
The listening coasts of many lands,
Sighed mournfully o'er level sands,
Or thunder'd amidst rocky strands.

I sit within my lonely room
Where the lamp's flame just breaks the gloom,
And thro' the darkness of the night
I see far down a starry light

A RECORD

Where nestled safely in the chine
The village street in one long line
Doth like a glittering serpent shine.

The keen wind blows through the dark skies,
The stars look down like countless eyes
That see and know, and therefore stare
Unmoved 'midst their serene high air :
And life seems but a dream, a shade
Which fleeting Time o'er space hath laid,
But which with Time shall one day fade.

Old memories are mine once more,
I see strange lives I lived of yore ;
With dimmed sight see I far-off things,
I feel the breath of bygone springs,
And ringing strangely in mine ears
I hear old laughter, alien tears
Slow falling, voices of past years.

Far back the soul can never see—
But dreams restore mysteriously
Dim visions of a possible past,
A time ere the last bond was cast
Aside that bound the struggling soul
Unto the brute, and first some goal
Loomed dimly over Life's vast shoal.

And dreaming so I live my dream :
I see a yellow turbid stream
Heavily flowing through clustered weeds
Of tropic growth, and 'midst the reeds

A RECORD

Of tall green rice upon its bank
A crouching tiger, long and lank,
With slow tail swaying from flank to flank.

Its eyes are yellow flames, and burn
Upon a man who dips an urn
Into the Ganges' sacred wave,
Unknowing he has reached his grave—
A short, hoarse roar, a scream, a blow !
And even as I shudder, lo,
My tiger-self I seem to know.

And dreaming so I live my dream :
I see a sunrise glory gleam
Against vast mountain-heights, and there
Upon a peak precipitous, bare,
I see an eagle scan the plain
Immeasurable of his domain,
With fierce untamable disdain :

When first the stars wax pale his eyes
Front the wide east where day doth rise,
And with unflinching gaze look straight
Against the sun, then proud, elate,
On tireless wings he swoops on high
O'er countless leagues, and thro' the sky
Drifts like a dark cloud ominously :

Then as day dies and swift night springs,
I hear the sudden rush of wings
And see the eagle from the plain
Sweep to his eyrie once again

A RECORD

With fierce keen dauntless eyes aglow—
And even as I watch them, lo,
Mine eagle-self I seem to know.

And dreaming so I live my dream :
I hear a savage voice, a scream
Scarcely articulate, and far
I see a red light like a star
Flashed 'neath old trees, and the first fire
Made by the brutish tribe burn higher
Until unfed its flames expire :

I see the savage whose hand drew
The fire from wood, whose swift breath blew
The flame until it gained new strength,—
I see him stand supreme at length,
And pointing to the burning flame
Bend low his swart and trembling frame
And cry aloud a guttural name :

A god at last the tribe hath found,
A god at whose strange crackling sound
Each man must bend in dread until
This strange new god hath worked his will :
But lo, one day the fire spread fast,
And ere its fury is o'erpast
The tribe within its furnace-blast

Hath perish'd, save one man alone
Who far in sudden fear hath flown :
But with a gleam of new-born thought
A second flame he soon hath wrought

A RECORD

Only to tramp it down, aware
At last that no dead god lies there,
Or one for whom no man need care.

He looks around to see some god,
And far upon the fire-scorch'd sod
He sees his brown-burnt tribesmen lie,
And thinks their voices fill the sky,
And dreads some unseen sudden blow—
And even as I watch him, lo,
My savage self I seem to know.

And dreaming so I live my dream :
I see a flood of moonlight gleam
Between vast ancient oaks, and round
A rough-hewn altar on the ground
Weird Druid priests are gatherèd
While through their midst a man is led
With face that is already dead :

A low chant swells throughout the wood,
Then comes a solemn interlude
Ere louder rings dim aisles along
Some ancient sacrificial song ;
Before the fane the victim kneels,
And without sound he forward reels
When the priest's knife the death-blow deals :

The moonlight falls upon his face,
His blood is spatter'd o'er the place,
But now he is ev'n as a flow'r
Uprooted in some tempest hour.

A RECORD

Dead, but whose seed shall elsewhere grow :
And as I look upon him, lo
Some old ancestral self I know.

Thus far dreams bring mysteriously
Visions of past lives back to me ;
Visions alone perhaps they are,
Each one a wandering futile star
Flash'd o'er the mental firmament,—
Yet may be thus in past times went
My soul in gradual ascent.

None sees the slow sure upward sweep
By which the soul from life-depths deep
Ascends—unless, mayhap, when free
With each new death we backward see
The long perspective of our race,
Our multitudinous past lives trace
Since first as breath of God through space

Each came, and filled the lowest thing
With life's faint pulse scarce quivering ;
So ever onward upward grew,
And ever with each death-birth knew
An old sphere left, a mystic change—
A sense of exaltation strange
Thus through a myriad lives to range.

But even in our mortal lives
At times the eager spirit strives
To gain through subtle memories
Some hint of life's past mysteries—

A RECORD

Brief moments they, that flash before
Bewilder'd eyes some scene of yore,
Some vivid hour returned once more.

Swift through the darken'd clouds of sense
A sudden lightning-gleam intense
Reveals some glimpse of the long past,
Some memory comes back at last—
And yet 'twas but a sudden strain
Of song—a scent—a sound of rain—
Some trifle—made all clear again.

With a swift glance such glimpses come
And go—but there are times for some
When keen the vision is, so keen
That thenceforth the indelible scene
Remains within the mind for aye,
Some reminiscence sad or gay,
Some action of a bygone day.

Thus came to me memorious gleams
From the closed past, no sleep-brought dreams
But revelations flashed out swift
Upon the mind : a sudden lift
Of the dense cloud of all past years,—
A moment when the thrilling ears
Heard, or the eyes slow filled with tears.

Thus has there flashed across my sight
A desert in a blinding light
Of scorching sun, a dreary waste
Of burning sand where seldom paced

A RECORD

The swift, gaunt camels with their freight
Of merchandise, but where the weight
Of silence lay inviolate.

There a few sterile rocks lay white
In the sun's glare, a band by might
Of old convulsions thither hurled
In the far days of the young world :
And in their midst a hollow cave
Was cleft, where dwelt, as in a grave,
One who came thence his soul to save.

Young, and from out the joyous strife
Of men he came to this drear life :
No more for him the wine's swift spell,
No more for him love's swift miracle—
But bitter as the dead sea's dust
Seem'd all past joys—dread things to thrust
Aside, all equally accursed.

In fervid prayer all day he sought
God's grace : in dreams at night he fought
The fierce temptations born of youth.
Awake, he strove to reach God's truth—
Asleep, he felt his passions rise
And darken all the heav'nly skies
With dread deceitful lovely lies.

Thus year by year he fell and rose
In endless conflict, till his woes
Fill'd all his days with burning tears
And dreadful never-ending fears :

A RECORD

Haggard he grew from scanty food,
With sun and blast and shelter rude
And terrors of his lonelihood.

With long hair streaming out behind
He raced before the burning wind,
With wild insane strained eyes alert
For demons lurking to his hurt—
And though the sun beat fiercely hot
Upon the sands, he heeded not
But like a wand'ring shadow shot

Across the burning level waste,
Oft shouting as he wildly raced
“ My body is in hell, but I,
Its soul, thus hither speed and cry
To God to blow me as a leaf
From out this agony of grief,
To slay, and give me death's relief ! ”

Oft as he fled, with from his mouth
The white froth blown thro' maddening
drought,
He pass'd the crouching lion's lair—
But when his shrill laugh fill'd the air
The desert monarch shrank, as though
He feared this raving shadow's woe,
This haggard wretch with eyes aglow.

But when the sun sank past the west
The hermit fled the desert, lest
God's eyes should lose him in the night,

A RECORD

And foes Satanic guide his flight
Till soul and body once again
Made one should with the pangs of twain
In hell for ever writhe in pain.

But when sleep came to him he lay
In peace, and oft a smile would play
Upon his face as though once more
In dreams he lived his life of yore,—
The life he did himself dismiss,
The old sweet time of joy and bliss,—
Heard laughter, or felt some loved kiss.

Thus have I seen, and seeing known
That he who lived afar alone,
A hermit on a dreary waste,
Was even that soul mine eyes have traced
Through brute and savage steadily,
That he even now is part of me
Just as a wave is of the sea.

* * * * *

Far out across the deep doth swell
The hoarse boom of the Black-Rock bell,
A heavy moan monotonous,
An inner sea-sound ominous,
As though throughout the ocean there
Relentless Conscience aye did bear
A bitter message of despair.

Still sweeps the old impetuous sea
Around the green earth ceaselessly—

A RECORD

Changeless, yet full of change, it seems
The very mirror of those dreams
We call men's lives—for are not they
Like life-sea waves Fate's winds doth sway
And break, yet which pass not away

Through depth of silent air, but blend
Once more with the deep and lend
Their never dying music sweet
To the great choral song complete ;
Each death is but a birth, a change—
Each soul through myriad byeways strange,
Through birth and death, doth upward range.

TRANSCRIPTS FROM NATURE

(FROM "THE HUMAN INHERITANCE," AND "EARTH'S
VOICES")

1882-1886

WILD ROSES

AGAINST the dim hot summer blue
Yon wave of white wild-roses lies,
Watching with listless golden eyes
The green leaves shutting out their view,
The tiny leaves whose motions bright
Are like small wings of emerald light:

White butterflies like snow-flakes fall
And brown bees drone their honey-call.

THE EBBING TIDE

A LONG low gurgle down the strand,
The sputtering of the drying wrack !
The tide is slowly ebbing back
With listless murmuring from the land,
And the small waves reluctant flow
Where the broad-bosomed currents go.

The sea has fall'n asleep, and lies
Dense blue beneath the dense blue skies.

DAWN AMID SCOTCH FIRS

THE furtive lights that herald dawn
Are shimmering 'mid the steel-blue firs ;
A slow awakening wind half stirs
And the long branches breathes upon ;
The east grows clearer—clearer—lo,
The day is born ! A refluent flow
Of silver waves along each tree
For one brief moment dazzlingly.

A DEAD CALM AND MIST

(Towards evening)

THE slow heave of the sleeping sea
With pulse-like motion swells and falls,
And drowsily a stray gull calls
The very wail of melancholy ;
All day the moveless mist has slept
On the same bosom east winds swept :

No breath of change in the grey mist,
Save just a dream of amethyst.

TANGLED SUNRAYS

ASLANT from yonder sunlit hill
The lance-like sunrays stream across
The meadows where the king-cups toss
I' the wind, and where the beech-leaves thrill
With flooding light they twist and turn
And seem to interlace and burn,

Until at last in tangles spun
'Mid the damp grass their race is run.

LOCH CORUISK (SKYE)

THE bleak and barren mountains keep
A never-ending gloom around
The lonely loch ; the winds resound,
The rains beat down, the tempests sweep,
The days are calm and dark and still,—
No other changes Coruisk fill.

Scarce living sound is heard, save high
The eagle's scream or wild swan's cry.

SUNRISE ABOVE BROAD WHEATFIELDS

THE pale tints of the twilight fields
Have turnèd into burnished gold,
For waves of yellow light have rolled
From the open'd east across the wealds ;
While 'mid the wheat spires far behind
Stirs lazily the awaken'd wind.

A skylark high (a song-made bird)
Sings as though God his singing heard.

PHOSPHORESCENT SEA

THE sea scarce heaves in its calm sleep,
The wind has not awakened yet
Tho' in its dreams it seems to fret,
For, ever and again, the deep
Hearkens a sigh that steals along
As might some echo of sad song :

Ah, there the wind stirs ! Lo, the dark
Dim sea's on fire around our barque.

A GREEN WAVE

BETWEEN the salt sea-send before
And all the flowing gulfs behind,
Half lifted by the rising wind,
Half eager for the ungain'd shore,
A great green wave of shining light
Sweeps onward crowned with dazzling white:

Above, the east wind shreds the sky
With plumes from the grey clouds that fly.

MID-NOON IN JANUARY

UPON a fibry fern-tree bough
A huge Iguana lies alow,
Bright yellow in the noonday glow
With bars of black,—it watcheth now
A gorgeous insect hover high
Till suddenly its lance doth fly

And catch the prey,—but still no sound
Breathes 'mid the green fern spaces round.

THE WASP

WHERE the ripe pears droop heavily
The yellow wasp hums loud and long
His hot and drowsy autumn song:
A yellow flame he seems to be,
When darting suddenly from on high
He lights where fallen peaches lie :

Yellow and black, this tiny thing's
A tiger-soul on elfin wings.

AN AUTUMNAL EVENING

DEEP black against the dying glow
The tall elms stand ; the rooks are still ;
No windbreath makes the faintest thrill
Amongst the leaves ; the fields below
Are vague and dim in twilight shades—
Only the bats wheel in their raids

On the grey flies, and silently
Great dusky moths go flitting by.

A WINTER HEDGEROW

THE wintry wolds are white ; the wind
Seems frozen ; in the shelter'd nooks
The sparrows shiver ; the black rooks
Wheel homeward where the elms behind
The manor stand ; at the field's edge
The redbreasts in the blackthorn hedge

Sit close, and under snowy eaves
The shrewmice sleep 'mid nested leaves.

THE ROOKERY AT SUNRISE

THE lofty elm-trees darkly dream
Against the steel-blue sky ; till far
I' the twilit east a golden star
O'erbrims the dusk in one vast stream
Of yellow light, and lo ! a cry
Breaks from the windy nest—the sky

Is filled with wheeling rooks—they sway
In one black phalanx towards the day.

MOONRISE

THE first snows of the year lie white
Upon the branches bending low ;
A surging wind the flakes doth blow
Before the coming feet of Night—
Half dusk, half day, betwixt the pines
Green-yellow the full moon reclines :

Green-yellow, and now wholly green,
While faint the windy stars are seen.

FIREFLIES

SOFTLY sailing emerald lights
Above the cornfields come and go,
Listlessly wandering to and fro :
The magic of these July nights
Has surely even pierced down deep
Where the earth's jewels unharmed sleep,

And filled with fire the emeralds there
And raised them thus to the outer air.

THE CRESCENT MOON

As though the Power that made the nautilus
A living glory o'er seas perilous
Scathless to roam, had from the utmost deep
Called a vast flawless pearl from out its sleep
And carv'd it crescent-wise, exceeding fair,—
So seems the crescent moon that thro' the air

With motionless motion glides from out the west,
And sailing onward ever seems at rest.

THE EAGLE

BETWEEN two mighty hills a sheer
Abyss—far down in the ravine
A thread-like torrent and a screen
Of oaks like shrubs—and one doth rear
A dry scarp'd peak above all sound
Save windy voices wailing round :

At sunrise here, in proud disdain
The eagle scans his vast domain.

A VENETIAN SUNSET : BEFORE A CHANGE

(Returning from Torcello)

IN violet hues each dome and spire
Stands outlined against flawless rose ;
O'er this a carmine ocean flows
Streak'd with pure gold and amber fire,
And through the sea of sundown mist
Float isles of melted amethyst :

Storm-portents, saffron streamers rise,
Fan-like, from Venice to the skies.

EMPIRE (PERSEPOLIS).

THE yellow waste of yellow sands,
The bronze haze of a scorching sky !
Lo, what are these that broken lie ;
Were these once temples made with hands,
Once towers and palaces that knew
No hint of that which one day threw

Their greatness to the winds—made this
The memory of Persepolis ?

FROM
ROMANTIC BALLADS

1888



THE WEIRD OF MICHAEL SCOTT

THE wild wind moaned : fast waned the light :
Dense cloud-wrack gloomed the front of night :
The moorland cries were cries of pain :
Green, red, or broad and glaring white
The lightnings flashed athwart the main.

The sound and fury of the waves,
Upon the rocks, among the caves,
Boomed inland from the thunderous strand :
Mayhap the dead heard in their graves
The tumult fill the hollow land.

With savage pebbly rush and roar
The billows swept the echoing shore
In clouds of spume and swirling spray :
The wild wings of the tempest bore
The salt rheum to the Haunted Brae.

Upon the Haunted Brae (where none
Would linger in the noon tide sun)
Michael the Wizard rode apace :
Wildly he rode where all men shun,
With madness gleaming on his face.

THE WEIRD OF MICHAEL SCOTT

Loud, loud he laugh'd whene'er he saw
The lightnings split on Lammer-Law,
*"Blood, bride, and bier the auld rune saith
Hell's wind tae me ae nicht soll blaw,
The nicht I ride unto my death!"*

Across the Haunted Brae he fled,
And mock'd and jeer'd the shuddering dead ;
Wan white the horse that he bestrode,
The fire-flaughts stricken as it sped
Flashed thro' the black mirk of the road.

And even as his race he ran,
A shade pursued the fleeing man,
A white and ghastly shade it was ;
*"Like saut sea-spray across wet san'
Or wind abune the moonlit grass !—*

*"Like saut sea-spray it follows me,
Or wind o'er grass—so fast's I flee :
In vain I shout, and laugh, and call—
The thing betwix me and the sea
God kens it is my ain lost saul !"*

Down, down the Haunted Brae, and past
The verge of precipices vast
And eyries where the eagles screech ;
By great pines swaying in the blast,
Through woods of moaning larch and beech ;

THE WEIRD OF MICHAEL SCOTT

On, on by moorland glen and stream,
Past lonely lochs where ospreys scream,
 Past marsh-lands where no sound is heard,
The rider and his white horse gleam,
 And, aye behind, that dreadful third.

Wild and more wild the wild wind blew,
But Michael Scott the rein ne'er drew :
 Loud and more loud his laughter shrill,
His wild and mocking laughter, grew,
 In dreadful cries 'twixt hill and hill.

At last the great high road he gained,
And now with whip and voice he strained
 To swifter flight the gleaming mare ;
Afar ahead the fierce sleet rained
 Upon the ruin'd House of Stair.

Then Michael Scott laughed long and loud
“ Whan shone the mune ahint yon cloud
 I kent the Towers that saw my birth—
Lang, lang, sall wait my cauld grey shroud,
 Lang cauld and weet my bed o' earth ! ”

But as by Stair he rode full speed
His horse began to pant and bleed :
 “ Win hame, win hame, my bonnie mare,
Win hame if thou would'st rest and feed,
 Win hame, we're nigh the House of Stair ! ”

THE WEIRD OF MICHAEL SCOTT

But with a shrill heart-bursten yell
The white horse stumbled, plunged, and fell,
 And loud a summoning voice arose,
“Is’t White-Horse Death that rides frae Hell,
Or Michael Scott that hereby goes ?”

“ Ah, Lord of Stair, I ken ye weel !
Avaunt, or I your saul sall steal,
 An’ send ye howling through the wood
A wild man-wolf—aye, ye maun reel
 An’ cry upon your Holy Rood !”

Swift swept the sword within the shade,
Swift was the flash the blue steel made,
 Swift was the downward stroke and rash—
But, as though levin-struck, the blade
 Fell splintered earthward with a crash.

With frantic eyes Lord Stair out-peered
When Michael Scott laughed loud and jeered :—
 “ Forth fare ye now, ye’ve gat lang room !
Ah, by my saul thou’lt dree thy weird !
 Begone, were-wolf, till the day o’ doom !”

A shrill scream pierced the lonely place ;
A dreadful change came o’er the face ;
 The head, with bristled hair, swung low ;
Michael the Wizard turned and fled
 And laughed a mocking laugh of woe.

THE WEIRD OF MICHAEL SCOTT

And through the wood there stole and crept,
And through the wood there raced and leapt,
A thing in semblance of a man ;
An awful look its wild eyes kept
As howling through the night it ran.

* * *

All day the curlew wailed and screamed,
All day the cushat crooned and dreamed,
All day the sweet muir-wind blew free :
Beyond the grassy knowes far gleamed
The splendour of the singing sea.

Above the myriad gorse and broom
And miles of golden kingcup-bloom
The larks and yellowhammers sang :
Where the scaur cast an hour-long gloom
The lintie's liquid notes out-rang.

Oft as he wandered to and fro—
As idly as the foam-bells flow
Hither and thither on the deep—
Michael the Wizard's face would grow
From death to life, and he would weep—

Weep, weep wild tears of bitter pain
For what might never be again :
Yet even as he wept his face
Would gleam with mockery insane
And with fierce laughter on he'd race

THE WEIRD OF MICHAEL SCOTT

At times he watched the white clouds sail
Across the wastes of azure pale ;

Or oft would haunt some moorland pool
Fringed round with thyme and fragrant gale
And canna-tufts of snow-white wool.

Long in its depths would Michael stare,
As though some secret thing lay there :

Mayhap the moving water made
A gloom where crouched a Kelpie fair
With death-eyes gleaming through the shade.

Then on with weary, listless feet
He fared afar, until the sweet
Cool sound of mountain brooks drew nigh,
And loud he heard the strayed lambs bleat
And the white ewes responsive cry.

High up among the hills full clear
He heard the belling of the deer
Amid the corries where they browsed,
And, where the peaks rose gaunt and sheer,
Fierce swirling echoes eagle-roused.

He watched the kestrel wheel and sweep,
He watched the dun fox glide and creep,
He heard the whaup's long-echoing call,
Watched in the stream the brown trout leap
And the grilse spring the waterfall.

THE WEIRD OF MICHAEL SCOTT

Along the slopes the grouse-cock whirred ;
The grey-blue heron scarcely stirred
 Amid the mossed grey tarn-side stones :
The burns gurg-gurgled through the yird
 Their sweet, clear, bubbling undertones.

Above the tarn the dragon-fly
Shot like a flashing arrow by ;
 And in a moving, shifting haze
The gnat-clouds sank or soared on high
 And danced their wild aerial maze.

As the day waned he heard afar
The hawking fern-owl's dissonant jar
 Disturb the silence of the hill :
The gloaming came : star after star
 He watched the skiey spaces fill.

But as the darkness grew and made
Forest and mountain one vast shade,
 Michael the Wizard moaned in dread—
A long white moonbeam like a blade
 Swept after him where'er he fled.

Swiftly he leapt o'er rock and root,
Swift o'er the fern his flying foot,
 But swifter still the white moonbeam :
Wild was the grey-owl's dismal hoot,
 But wilder still his maniac scream.

THE WEIRD OF MICHAEL SCOTT

Once in his flight he paused to hear
A hollow shriek that echoed near:—

 The louder were his dreadful cries,
The louder rang adown the sheer
 Gaunt cliffs the echoing replies.

As though a hunted wolf, he raced
To the lone woods across the waste
 Steep granite slopes of Crammond-Low—
The haunted forest where none faced
 The terror that no man might know.

Betwixt the mountains and the sea
Dark leagues of pine stood solemnly,
 Voiceful with grim and hollow song,
Save when each tempest-stricken tree
 A savage tumult would prolong.

Beneath the dark funereal plumes,
Slow waving to and fro—death-blooms
 Within the void dim wood of death—
Oft shuddering at the fearful glooms
 Sped Michael Scott with failing breath.

Once, as he passed a dreary place,
Between two trees he saw a face—
 A white face staring at his own:
A weird, 'strange cry he gave for grace,
 And heard an echoing moan.

THE WEIRD OF MICHAEL SCOTT

“ Whate’er you be, O thing that hides
Among the trees—O thing that bides
In yonder moving mass o’ shade
Come forth tae me ! ”—wan Michael glides
Swift, as he speaks, athrough the glade :

“ Whate’er you be, I fear ye nought !
Michael the Wizard has na fought
Wi’ men and demons year by year
To shirk ae thing he has na sought
Or blanch wi’ any mortal fear ! ”

But not a sound thrilled thro’ the air—
Not even a she-fox in her lair
Or brooding bird made any stir—
All was as still and blank and bare
As is a vaulted sepulchre.

Then awe, and fear, and wild dismay
O’ercame mad Michael, ashy grey,
With eyes as of one newly dead:
“ If wi’ my sword I canna slay,
Thou’lt dree my weird when it is said ! ”

“ Whate’er you be, man, beast, or sprite,
I wind ye round wi’ a sheet o’ light—
Aye, round and round your burning frame
I cast by spell o’ wizard might
A fierce undying sheet of flame ! ”

THE WEIRD OF MICHAEL SCOTT

Swift as he spoke a thing sprang out,
A man-like thing, all hemmed about
With blazing, blasting burning fire !
The wind swoop'd wi' a demon-shout
And whirled the red flame higher and higher !

And as, appalled, wan Michael stood
The flying flaughts swift fired the wood ;
And even as he shook and stared
The gaunt pines turned the hue of blood
And all the waving branches flared.

Then with wild leaps the accursèd thing
Drew nigh and nigher : with a spring
Michael escaped its fiery clasp,
Although he felt the fierce flame sting
And all the horror of its grasp.

Swift as an arrow far he fled,
But swifter still the flames o'erhead
Rushed o'er the waving sea of pines,
And hollow noises crashed and sped
Like splitting blasts in ruin'd mines.

A burning league—leagues, leagues of fire
Arose behind, and ever higher
The flying semi-circle came :
And aye beyond this dreadful pyre
There leapt a man-like thing in flame.

THE WEIRD OF MICHAEL SCOTT

With awful scream doom'd Michael saw
The flying furnace reach Black-Law !

*"Blood, bride, and bier, the auld rune saith
Hell's wind tae me ae nicht soll blaw,
The nicht I ride unto my death !"*

*"The blood of Stair is round me now :
My bride can laugh to scorn my vow :
My bier, my bier, ah ! soll it be
Wi' a crown o' fire around my brow
Or deep within the cauld saut sea ?"*

Like lightning, over Black-Law's slope
Michael fled swift with sudden hope :
What though the forest roared behind—
He yet might gain the cliff and grope
For where the sheep-paths twist and wind.

The air was like a furnace-blast
And all the dome of heaven one vast
Expanse of flame and fiery wings :
To the cliff's edge, ere all be past,
With shriek on shriek lost Michael springs.

But none can hear his bitter call,
None, none can see him sway and fall—
Yea, one there is that shrills his name !
*"O God, it is my ain lost saul
That I hae girl wi' deathless flame !"*

THE WEIRD OF MICHAEL SCOTT

With waving arms and dreadful cries
He cowers beneath those glaring eyes—
 But all in vain—in vain—in vain !
His own soul clasps him as its prize
 And scorches death upon his brain.

Body and soul together swing
Adown the night until they fling
 The hissing sea-spray far and wide
At morn the fresh sea-wind will bring
 A black corpse tossing on the tide.

THE TWIN-SOUL

IN the dead of the night a spirit came :
Her moon-white face and her eyes of flame
Were known to me :—I called her name—
 The name that shall not be spoken at all
 Till Death hath this body of mine in thrall !

And she laughed to see me lying there,
Wrapped in the living-corpse bloody and fair,
And my soul 'mid its thin films shining bare—
 And I rose and followed her glance so sweet
 And passed from the house with noiseless feet.

I know not myself what I knew, what I saw :
I know that it filled me with trouble and awe,
With pain that still at my heart doth gnaw :
 That she with her wild eyes witched my soul
 And whispered the name of the Unknown
 Goal.

O, wild was her laugh, and wild was my cry
When with one long flash and a weary sigh
I awoke as from sleep bewilderingly :
 Her voice, her eyes, they are with me still,
 O Spirit-Enchantress, O Demon-Will !

THE ISLE OF LOST DREAMS

THERE is an isle beyond our ken,
Haunted by Dreams of weary men.
Grey Hopes enshadow it with wings
Weary with burdens of old things :
There the insatiate water-springs
Rise with the tears of all who weep :
And deep within it, deep, oh deep
The furtive voice of Sorrow sings.

There evermore,
Till Time be o'er,
Sad, oh so sad, the Dreams of men
Drift through the isle beyond our ken.

THE DEATH-CHILD

SHE sits beneath the elder-tree
And sings her song so sweet,
And dreams o'er the burn that darksomely
Runs by her moonwhite feet.

Her hair is dark as starless night,
Her flower-crown'd face is pale,
But oh, her eyes are lit with light
Of dread ancestral bale.

She sings an eerie song, so wild
With immemorial dule—
Though young and fair Death's mortal child
That sits by that dark pool.

And oft she cries an eldritch scream
When red with human blood
The burn becomes a crimson stream,
A wild, red, surging flood :

Or shrinks, when some swift tide of tears—
The weeping of the world—
Dark eddying 'neath man's phantom-fears,
Is o'er the red stream hurl'd.

THE DEATH-CHILD

For hours beneath the elder-tree
She broods beside the stream ;
Her dark eyes filled with mystery,
Her dark soul rapt in dream.

The lapsing flow she heedeth not
Though deepest depths she scans :
Life is the shade that clouds her thought,
As Death's the eclipse of man's.

Time seems but as a bitter thing
Remember'd from of yore :
Yet ah (she thinks) her song she'll sing
When Time's long reign is o'er.

Erstwhiles she bends alow to hear
What the swift water sings,
The torrent running darkly clear
With secrets of all things.

And then she smiles a strange sad smile,
And lets her harp lie long ;
The death-waves oft may rise the while,
She greets them with no song.

Few ever cross that dreary moor,
Few see that flower-crown'd head ;
But whoso knows that wild song's lure
Knoweth that he is dead.

THE COVES OF CRAIL

THE moon-white waters wash and leap,
The dark tide floods the Coves of Crail ;
Sound, sound he lies in dreamless sleep,
Nor hears the sea-wind wail.

The pale gold of his oozy locks,
Doth hither drift and thither wave ;
His thin handsplash against the rocks,
His white lips nothing crave.

Afar away she laughs and sings—
A song he loved, a wild sea-strain—
Of how the mermen weave their rings
Upon the reef-set main.

Sound, sound he lies in dreamless sleep,
Nor hears the sea-wind wail,
Tho' with the tide his white hands creep
Amid the Coves of Crail.



FROM
SOSPIRI DI ROMA

1891

H



PRELUDE

“Supra un munti sparman stu bellu ciuri !

Chistu è lu ciuri di la tò billizza.”

(*Sicilian Canzuno.*)

IN a grove of ilex
Of oak and of chestnut,
Far on the sunswept
Heights of Tusculum,
There groweth a blossom,
A snow-white bloom,
Which many have heard of,
But few have seen.
Oft bright as the morning,
Oft pale as moonlight,
There in the greenness,
In shadow and sunshine
It grows, awaiting
The hand that shall pluck it :
For this blossom springeth
From the heart of a poet
And of her who loved him

PRELUDE

In the long ago
Here on the sunswept
Heights of Tusculum.
And them it awaiteth,
Deep lovers only,
Kindred of those
Who loved and passioned
There, and whose hearts' blood,
Wrought from the Earth
This marvellous blossom,
The Shadow-Lily,
The Flower of Dream.

Few that shall see it,
Fewer still
Those that shall pluck it :
But whoso gathers
That snow-white blossom
Shall love for ever,
For the passionate breath
Of the Shadow-Lily
Is Deathles Joy :
And whoso plucks it, keeps it, treasures it,
Has sunshine ever
About the heart,
Deep in the heart immortal sunshine :
For this is the gift of the snow-white blossom,
This is the gift of the Flower of Dream.

SUSURRO

BREATH o' the grass,
Ripple of wandering wind,
Murmur of tremulous leaves:
A moonbeam moving white
Like a ghost across the plain:
A shadow on the road:
And high up, high,
From the cypress-bough,
A long sweet melancholy note.
Silence.
And the topmost spray
Of the cypress-bough is still
As a wavelet in a pool:
The road lies duskily bare:
The plain is a misty gloom:
Still are the tremulous leaves;
Scarce a last ripple of wind,
Scarce a breath i' the grass.
Hush: the tired wind sleeps:
Is it the wind's breath, or
Breath o' the grass.

CLOUDS

(Agro Romano)

As though the dead cities
Of the ancient time
Were builded again
In the heights of heaven,
With spires of amber
And golden domes,
Wide streets of topaz and amethyst ways ;
Far o'er the pale blue waste,
Oft purple-shadowed,
Of the Agro Romano,
Rises the splendid
City of Cloud.
There must the winds be soft as the twilight
Invisibly falling when the daystar has wester'd ;
There must the rainbows trail up through the sun-
light,
So fair are the hues on those white snowy masses.
Mountainous glories,
They move superbly ;
Crumbling so slowly,

CLOUDS

That none perceives when
The golden domes
Are sunk in the valleys
Of fathomless snow,
Or when, in silence,
The loftiest spires
Fade into smoke, or as vapour that passeth
When the hot breath of noon
Thirsts through the firmament.
Beautiful, beautiful,
The City of Cloud,
In splendour ruinous,
With Golden domes,
And spires of amber,
Builded superbly,
In the heights of heaven.

RED POPPIES

(In the Sabine valleys near Rome)

THROUGH the seeding grass,
And the tall corn,
The wind goes :
With nimble feet,
And blithe voice,
Calling, calling,
The wind goes
Through the seeding grass,
And the tall corn.

What calleth the wind,
Passing by—
The shepherd-wind ?
Far and near
He laugheth low,
And the red poppies
Lift their heads
And toss i' the sun.

RED POPPIES

A thousand thousand blooms
Tost i' the air,
Banners of joy,
For 'tis the shepherd-wind
Passing by,
Singing and laughing low
Through the seeding grass
And the tall corn.

THE WHITE PEACOCK

HERE where the sunlight
Floodeth the garden,
Where the pomegranate
Reareth its glory
Of gorgeous blossom ;
Where the oleanders
Dream through the noontides ;
And, like surf o' the sea
Round cliffs of basalt,
The thick magnolias
In billowy masses
Front the sombre green of the ilexes :
Here where the heat lies
Pale blue in the hollows,
Where blue are the shadows
On the fronds of the cactus,
Where pale blue the gleaming
Of fir and cypress,
With the cones upon them
Amber or glowing

THE WHITE PEACOCK

With virgin gold :
Here where the honey-flower
Makes the heat fragrant,
As though from the gardens
Of Gulistân,
Where the bulbul singeth
Through a mist of roses,
A breath were borne :
Here where the dream-flowers,
The cream-white poppies
Silently waver,
And where the Scirocco,
Faint in the hollows,
Foldeth his soft white wings in the sunlight,
And lieth sleeping
Deep in the heart of
A sea of white violets :
Here, as the breath, as the soul of this beauty,
Moveth in silence, and dreamlike, and slowly,
White as a snow-drift in mountain valleys
When softly upon it the gold light lingers :
White as the foam o' the sea that is driven
O'er billows of azure agleam with sun-yellow :
Cream-white and soft as the breasts of a girl,
Moves the White Peacock, as though through the
noontide
A dream of the moonlight were real for a moment.
Dim on the beautiful fan that he spreadeth,
Foldeth and spreadeth abroad in the sunlight,
Dim on the cream-white are blue adumbrations,
Shadows so pale in their delicate blueness

THE WHITE PEACOCK

That visions they seem as of vanishing violets,
The fragrant white violets veined with azure,
Pale, pale as the breath of blue smoke in far
woodlands.

Here, as the breath, as the soul of this beauty,
White as a cloud through the heats of the noon-
tide

Moves the White Peacock.

THE SWIMMER OF NEMI

(The Lake of Nemi : September)

WHITE through the azure,
The purple blueness,
Of Nemi's waters
The swimmer goeth.

Ivory-white, or wan white as roses
Yellowed and tanned by the suns of the Orient,
His strong limbs sever the violet hollows ;
A shimmer of white fantastic motions
Wavering deep through the lake as he swimmeth.
Like gorse in the sunlight the gold of his yellow
 hair,
Yellow with sunshine and bright as with dew-
 drops,
Spray of the waters flung back as he tosseth
His head i' the sunlight in the midst of his
 laughter :
Red o'er his body, blossom-white mid the blueness,
And trailing behind him in glory of scarlet,
A branch of the red-berried ash of the mountains.

THE SWIMMER OF NEMI

White as a moonbeam
Drifting athwart
The purple twilight,
The swimmer goeth —
Joyously laughing,
With o'er his shoulders,
Agleam in the sunshine
The trailing branch
With the scarlet berries.
Green are the leaves, and scarlet the berries,
White are the limbs of the swimmer beyond them,
Blue the deep heart of the still, brooding lakelet,
Pale-blue the hills in the haze of September,
The high Alban hills in their silence and beauty,
Purple the depths of the windless heaven
Curv'd like a flower o'er the waters of Nemi.

AL FAR DELLA NOTTE

HARK !

As a bubbling fount
That suddenly wells
And rises in tall spiral waves and flying spray,
The high, sweet, quavering, throbbing voice
Of the nightingale !
Not yet the purple veil of dusk has fallen,
But o'er the yellow band
That binds the west
The vesper star beats like the pulse of heaven.

Up from the fields
The peasants troop,
Singing their songs of love :
And oft the twang of thin string'd music breaks
High o'er the welcoming shouts,
The homing laughter.
The whirling bats are out,
And to and fro
The blue swifts wheel
Where, i' the shallows of the dusk,
The grey moths flutter

AL FAR DELLA NOTTE

Over the pale blooms
Of the night-flowering bay.
Softly adown the slopes,
And o'er the plain,
Ave Maria
Solemnly soundeth.
The long day is over.
Dusk, and silence now :
And Night, that is as dew
On the Flower of the World.

THISTLEDOWN

(Spring on the Campagna)

BLOWETH like snow
From the grey thistles
The thistledown :
And the fairy-feathers
O' the dandelion
Are tossed by the breeze
Hither and thither :
Over the grasses,
The seeding grasses
Where the poppies shake
And the campions waver,
And where the clover,
Purple and white,
Fills leagues with the fragrance
Of sunsweet honey ;
Hither and thither
The fairy-feathers
O' the dandelion,
And white puff-balls

THISTLEDOWN

O' the thistledown,
Merrily dancing,
Light on the breeze,
Wheeling and sailing,
And laughing to scorn
The butterflies
And the moths of azure ;
Blowing like snow
Or foam o' the sea,
Hither and thither
Upward and downward.

Now for a moment
A thistledown
On a white ball resteth,
Sunbleached and hollow ;
A human skull
Of the ancient days,
When Sabines and Latins
Made all the land here
As red with blood
As it now is scarlet
With flaming poppies.
Now the feathers,
O' the dandelion,
Like sunlit swansdown
Long tost by the wind
O'er the laughter of waters,
Are blown like surf
On a hidden rock—
A broken arch

THISTLEDOWN

Of a Roman temple,
Where long, long ago,
The swarthy priests
Worshipped their Gods,
The Gods now less than
The very dust
Whence the green grass springeth.
But for a moment, then the wind takes them,
Blows them, plays with them,
Tosses them high through the gold of the sunshine,
Wavers them upward, wavers them downward.
Hither and thither among the white butterflies,
Over and under the blue-moths and honey-bees,
Over the leagues of blossoming clover,
Purple and white, the sweet-smelling clover,
Far o'er the grasses,
And grey hanging thistles,
Hither and thither
Are floating and sailing
The fairy-feathers
O' the dandelion,
Bloweth like snow
The joy o' the meadows,
The thistledown.

THE MANDOLIN

Tinkle-trink, tinkle-trink, trinkle-trinkle, trink !
Hark, the mandolin !
Through the dusk the merry music falleth sweet.
Where the fountain falls,
Where the fountain falls all shimmering in the
 moonshine white,
Tinkle-trink, tinkle-trink, trinkle-trinkle, trink !
Where the wind-stirred olives quiver,
Quiver, quiver, leaves a-quiver,
White as silver in the moonlight but like bat-
 wings in the dusk,
Where the great grey moths sail slowly
Slowly, slowly, like faint dreams
In the wildering woods of Sleep,
Where no night or day is,
But only, in dim twilights, the wan sheen
Of the Moon of Sleep.

Hark, the mandolin !
Where the dark-coned cypress rises,
Thin, more thin, till threadlike, wavering

THE MANDOLIN

The last spray soars up as smoke,
As a vanishing breath of incense,
To the silent stars that glimmer
In the veil of purple darkness,
The deep vault of heaven that seemeth
As a veil that falleth,
A dark veil that foldeth gently
The tired day-worn world, breathing stilly as a
sleeping child.

Hark, the mandolin :
And a soft, low sound of laughter !
Tinkle-trink, tinkle-trink, trinkle-trinkle, trink !

Hush : from out the cypress standing
Black against the yellow moonlight
What a thrill, what a sob, what a sudden rapture
flung
Athwart the dark !
Passion of song !
Silence again, save mid the whispering leaves
The unquiet wind, that as the tide
Cometh and goeth.
Now one long thrilling note, prolonged and sweet
And then a low swift stir,
A whirr of fluttering wings,
And, in the laurels near, two nested nightingales !
Loud, loud, the mandolin,
Tinkle-trink, tinkle-trink, trinkle-trinkle, trink,
Trink, trink, trinkle-trink !
Through the fragrant silent night it draweth near,
Ah, the low cry, the little laugh, the rustle :

THE MANDOLIN

Tinkle-trink — hush, a kiss — *tinke-trink* — hush —
hush —

Tinkle-trink, tinkle-trink, trinkle-trinkle, trink!

Where the shadows massed together

Make a hollow darkness, girt

By the yellow flood of moonshine floating by

Where the groves of ilex whisper

In the silence, fragrant, sweet,

Where the ilexes are dreaming

In their depths of darkest shadow,

Move the fireflies slowly,

Mazily inweaving,

Interweaving, interflowing ;

Wandering fires, like little lanterns

Borne by souls of birds and flowers

Seeking ever resurrection

In the gladsome world of sunshine ;

Seeking vainly through the darkness

In beneath the ilex-branches

Where the very moonshine faileth,

And the dark grey moths wave wanly

Flitting from the outer gloaming.

Oh, the fragrance, and the mystery, and the
silence !

Where the fireflies, mid the ilex,

Rise and fall, recross, inweave

In an endless wavy motion,

In a slow aerial dancing

In a maze of little flames

In and out the ilex-branches :

Hush ! the mandolin !

THE MANDOLIN

Louder still, and louder, louder :
Ah, the happy laugh, and rustle,
Rustle, rustle.

Ah, the kiss, the cry, the rapture.
Silence, where the ilex-branches
Loom out faintly from their darkness
Where, slow-wandering flames, the fireflies
Rise and fall, recross, inweave
In an endless, wavy motion,
In a slow aerial dancing.

Silence : not a breath is stirring :
Not a leaflet quivers faintly.
Silence : even the bats are silent
Wheeling swiftly through the upper air,
Where the gnat's thin shrilling music
Fades into the flooding moonlight :
Hush, low-whispered words and kisses,
Hush, a cry of pain, of rapture.
Not a sound, a sound thereafter,
But a low sweet sigh of breathing,
And, from out the flowering laurel,
Just a twittering breath of music,
Just a long-drawn pulsing note
Of a sweet and passionate answer.
Silence : hark, a stir—low laughter—
Whispered words—and rustle—rustle—
Trink—trink—the mandolin !
Hark, it trinkles down the valley,
Trink—trink, trinkle-trink, trinkle-trink !
Past the cistus, blooming whitely

THE MANDOLIN

Past the oleander-bushes,
Past the ilexes and olives,
Where the two tall pines are whispering
With the sleepy wind that foldeth
His tired pinions ere he sleepeth
On the flood of amber moonlight.
Wind o' the night, tired wind o' night—
Tinkle-trink, trink, trinkle-trink,
Trink, trinkle-trink,
Trink !

BAT-WINGS

FLITTER, flitter, through the twilight,
Pipistrello :
Where the moonshine glitters
Waver thy swart wings,
Darting hither, thither,
Swift as wheeling swallow.
Where the shadows gather
In and out thou flittest,
Flitter, flitter,
Waver, waver,
Pipistrello.
Thin thy faint aerial song is,
Thin and fainter than the shrilling
Of the gnats thou chasest wildly,
But how delicately dainty—
Thin and faint and wavering also,
In the high sweet upper air,
Where the gnats weave endless mazes
In their pyramidal dances—
And thy dusky wings go flutter,
Flutter, flutter,
Waver, waver,
But without a sound or rustle
Through the purple air of twilight.
Flitter, flitter, flutter, flitter,
Pipistrello.

THE WILD MARE

LIKE a breath that comes and goes
O'er the waveless waste
Of sleeping Ocean,
So sweeps across the plain
The herd of wild horses.
Like banners in the wind
Their flying tails,
Their streaming manes :
And like spume of the sea
Fang'd by breakers,
The white froth tossed from their blood-red
nostrils.
Out from the midst of them
Dasheth a white mare,
White as a swan in the pride of her beauty :
And, like the whirlwind,
Following after,
A snorting stallion,
Swart as an Indian
Diver of coral !

THE WILD MARE

Wild the gyrations
The rush and the whirl ;
Loud the hot panting
Of the snow-white mare,
As swift upon her
The stallion gaineth :
Fierce the proud snorting
Of him, victorious :
And loud, swelling loud on the wind from the
mountains,
The hoarse savage tumult of neighing and
stamping
Where, wheeling, the herd of wild horses
awaiteth—
Ears thrown back, tails thrashing their flanks or
swept under—
The challenging scream of the conqueror-stallion.

SCIROCCO

(*June*)

SOFTLY as feathers
That fall through the twilight
When wild swans are winging
Back to the northward :
Softly as waters,
Unruffled, and tideless,
Laving the mosses
Of inland seas :
Soft through the forest,
And down through the valley,
Light as a breath o'er the pools of the marish,
Still as a moonbeam over the pastures,
Goeth Scirocco.

Warm his breath :
The night-flowers know it,
Love it, and open
Their blooms for its sweetness :
Warm the tender low wind of his pinions
Scarce brushing together the spires of the
grasses :

SCIROCCO

Ah, how they whisper, the little green leaflets
Black in the dusk or grey in the moonlight :
Ah, how they whisper and shiver, the tremulous
Leaves of the poplar, and shimmer and rustle
When soft as a vapour that steals from the
marshes
The wings of Scirocco fan silently through them.

Ofttimes he lingers
By ruined nests
Deep in the hedgerows,
And bloweth a feather
In little eddies,
A yellow feather
That once had fluttered
On a breast alive with
A rapture of song :
But slowly ceaseth,
And passeth sadly.
Ofttimes he riseth
Up through the branches
Where the fireflies wander,
Up through the branches
Of oak and chestnut,
And stirs so gently
With sway of his wings
That the leaves, dreaming,
Think that a moonbeam
Only, or moonshine,
Moves through the heart of them.
Upward he soareth

SCIROCCO

Oft, silently floating
Through the purple æther,
Still as the fern-owl over the covert,
Or as allocco haunting the woodland,
Up to the soft curded foam of the cloudlets,
The white dappled cloudlets the south-wind
bringeth.

There, dreaming, he moveth
Or sails through the moonlight,
Till chill in the high upper air and the silence,
Slowly he sinketh
Earthward again,
Silently floateth
Down o'er the woodlands :
Foldeth his wings and slow through the branches
Drifts, scarcely breathing,
Till tired, mid the flowers or the hedgerows he
creepeth,
Whispers alow mid the spires of the grasses,
Or swooning at last to motionless slumber
Floats like a shadow adrift on the pastures.

THE WIND AT FIDENAE

(To D. H. In Remembrance)

FRESH from the Sabines,
The Beautiful Hills,
The wind bloweth.
Down o'er the slopes,
Where the olives whiten
As though the feet
Of the wind were snow-clad :
Out o'er the plain
Where a paradise
Of wild blooms waveth,
And where, in the sunswept
Leagues of azure,
A thousand larks are
As a thousand founts
Mid the perfect joy of
The depths of heaven.
Swift o'er the heights,
And over the valleys
Where the grey oxen sleepily stand,
Down, like a wild hawk swooping earthward,

THE WIND AT FIDENAE

Over the winding reaches of Tiber,
Bloweth the wind !
How the wind bloweth,
Here on the steeps of
Ancient Fidenae,
Where no voice soundeth
Now, save the shepherd
Calling his sheep ;
And where none wander
But only the cloud-shadows,
Vague ghosts of the past.
Sweet and fresh from the Sabines,
Now as of yore,
When Etruscan maidens
Laughed as their lovers
Mocked the damsels
Of alien Rome,
Sweet with the same young breath o' the world
Bloweth the wind.

IN JULY

(South of Rome)

PALE-ROSE the dust lying thick upon the road :
Grey-green the thirsty grasses by the way.
The long flat silvery sheen of the vast champaign
Shimmers beneath the blazing tide of noon.
The blood-red poppies flame
Like furnace-breaths :
Like wan, vague dreams the misty lavender
Drifts greyly through the quivering maze, or seems
Thus through the visionary glow to drift.
On the far slope, beyond the ruin'd arch,
A grey-white cloudlet rests,
The cluster'd sheep a low : close, moveless all,
And silent, save when faintly from their midst
A slumberous tinkle comes,
Cometh, and goeth.
Low-stretch'd in the blue shade,
Beneath the ruin,
The shepherd sleeps.
Nought stirs.

IN JULY

The wind moves not, nor with the faintest breath
Toucheth the half-fallen blooms of the asphodels.
Here only, where the pale pink ash
Of the long road doth slowly flush to rose,
A bronze-wing'd beetle moveth low,
And sends one tiny puff of smoke-like dust
Faint through the golden glimmer of the heat.

•

DE PROFUNDIS

WHENCE hast thou gone,
O vision belovèd ?
There is silence now
In thy groves, and never
A voice proclaimeth
Thy glory come,
Thy joy rearisen !

O passion of beauty,
Forsake not thus
Those who have worshipped thee,
Body and soul !
Come to us, come to us,
Inviolate, Beautiful,
Thou whose breath
Is as Spring o'er the world,
Whose smile is the flowering
Of the wide green Earth !
Deep in the heart of thee,

DE PROFUNDIS

Like a moonbeam moving
Through the heart of a hill-lake,
Moveth Compassion :
O Beloved,
Be with us ever,
Thou, the Beautiful,
Passion of Beauty,
Alma Victrix !

ULTIMO SOSPIRO

O dolce primavera pien' di olezzo e amor !
Che fai tu . . . che fai fra tanti fior ?

Colgo le rose amabili dei più soavi odori ,
Colgo le rose affabili e i lunghi gelsomini,
Nei olienti miei giardini io vi tengo al cor.

Roman Folksong.

Joy of the world,
O flower-crown'd Spring,
With thine odorous breath and thy heart of love,
Breathe through this verse thy sweet message of
longing.
Lo, in the gardens of Alma, whose lovers
Die gladly in worship, but fail not ever,
Oft have I strayed,
Oft have I lingered
When high through the noon the lost lark has
been singing,
Or when in the moonlight
Soft through the silence has whispered the ocean,
Or when, in the dark
Of the ilex-woods,
Where the fireflies wavered

ULTIMO SOSPIRO

Frail wandering stars,
Not a sound has been heard
But Scirocco rustling
The midmost leaves
Of the trees where he sleepeth.

Roses of love,
White lilies of dream,
Frail blooms that have blossom'd
Into life with thy breathing :
Blow them, O wind,
West wind of the Spring,
Lift them and take them where gardens await
them,
Lift them and take them to those who hearken,
Facing the dawn, for the sounds of the morning
With wide eyes glad with the beautiful vision,
O whispers of joy,
O breaths of passion,
O sighs of longing.

POEMS

1889-1893



OCEANUS

I

WHILE still the dusk impends above the glimmering waste

A tremor comes: wave after wave turns silvery bright:

A sudden yellow gleam athwart the east traced:

The waning stars fade forth, swift perishing pyres.

The moon lies pearly-wan upon the front of Night.

Then all at once upwells a flood of golden light
And a myriad waves flash forth a myriad fires:

Now is the hour the amplest glory of life to taste,
Outswimming towards the sun upon the billowy waste.

II

The pure green waves! with crests of dazzling foam ashine,

Onward they roll: innumerably grand, they beat
A wild and jubilant triumph-music all divine!

The sea-fowl, their white kindred of the spray-swept air,

OCEANUS

Scream joyous echoes as with wave-dipped
pinions fleet
They whirl before the blast or vanish 'mid
blown sleet.
In loud-resounding, strenuous, conquering play
they fare,
Like clouds, high over head, forgotten lands i'
the brine—
Great combing deep-sea waves with sunlit foam
ashine.

III

On the wide wastes she lives her lawless, pas-
sionate life :
Enslaved of none, the imperious mighty Sea !
How glorious the music of her waves at strife
With all the winds of heaven that, fiercely
wooing, blow !
On high she ever chants her psalm of Victory ;
Afar her turbulent paean tells that she is free :
The tireless albatross with wings like foam or
snow
Flies leagues on leagues for days, and yet the
world seems rife
With nought save windy waves and the Sea's wild
free life !

IV

How oft the strange, wild, haunting glamour of
the Sea,
The strange, compelling magic of her thrilling
Voice,

OCEANUS

Have won me, when, 'mid lonely places, wild and free
As any wand'ring wind, I have heard along the shore
The wondrous ever-varying Sea-song loud rejoice.
I have seen a snowy petrel, arising, poise
Above the green-sloped wave, then pass for evermore
From keenest sight, and I have thought that I
might be
Thus also deathward lured by glamour of the Sea.

v

Hark to the long resilient surge o' the ebbing tide :
With shingly rush and roar it foams adown the strand :
The great Sea heaves her restless bosom far and wide—
Heedless she seems of winds and all the forceful laws
That bar her empire over the usurping Land :
Enough, she dreams, is her imperial command
To make the very torrents, waveward falling, pause :
She scorns the Bridegroom-Land, yet is a subject Bride
For she must come and go with each recurrent tide.

OCEANUS

VI

On moonless nights, when winds are still, her
stealthy waves
Creep towards the listening land ; with voices
soft and low
They whisper strange sea-secrets 'mid the hollow
caves :
A wondrous song it is that rises then and falls !
Deep-buried memories of the ancient long-ago,
Confused strange echoes of some vanished old-
world woe,
Weird prophecies reverberant round those wave-
worn walls :
When loud the wrathful billows roar and the Sea runnes
Her deepest mourning broods beneath the foam-
ing waves.

VII

As some aerial spirit weaves a rainbow-veil
Of mist, his high immortal loveliness to hide ;
So too thy palpitant waters, duskily pale,
Ofttimes take on a sudden splendour wild.
Then thy sea-horses rise, fierce prancing side
by side,
And—like the host of the dead-arisen—ride
Ghastly afar to bournes where all the dead lie
piled ! . . .
Superb, fantastic, crown'd with flying splendours
frail,
Thou, when in dreams, thou weav'st thy phos-
phorescent veil !

OCEANUS

VIII

Vast, vast, immeasurably vast, thy dreadful peace
When heaving with slow, mighty breath thou liest
In utter rest, and dost thy ministering winds release
So that with folded wings they too subside,
Floating through hollow spaces, though the highest
Stirs his long tremulous pinions when thou sighest !
Then in thy soul, that doth in fathomless depths abide,
All wild desires and turbulent longings cease—
Profound, immeasurable then, thy dreadful peace !

IX

But in thy noon of night, serene as death, when under
The terrible silence of that archèd dome
Not a lost whisper ev'n of thy wandering thunder
Ascends like the spiral smoke of perishing flame,
Nor dying wave on thy swart bosom sinks in foam—
Then, then the world is thine, thy heritage,
thy home !
What then for thee, O Sea, thou Terror ! or what name
To call thee by, thou Sphinx, thou Mystery, thou Wonder—
Above thou art Living Death, Oblivion under !

A PARIS NOCTURNE

OVER the lonesome hollows
And secret haunts of the river,
Past field and homestead and village,
Past the grey wharves and the piers
The darkness moves like a veil,
Save when obscure, vast, nigrescent
Flakes from the travelling gloom
Slant westward great fans of blackness.

Then a mist of radiance,
Lamps with red lights and yellow,
Foam-white, and blue as an ice floe,
Lamps intermingling with gas-light,
Leagues of wind-wavered gas-light,
Lamps on the masts of barges,
Lamps upon sloops and on steamers,
Lamps below quays and dark bridges,
Yellow and red and green,
Like a myriad growths phosphorescent
When a swamp, erewhile flooded with waters,
Lies low to the stare of the moon
And the stealthy white breath of the wind.

And, over all, one light
Palpitant, circular, wide,
Sweeping the city vast—

A PARIS NOCTURNE

Yonder, beyond where in shadow
The thronged Champs Elysées are filling
With echoes of human voices,
With shadows of human lives,
With phantoms of vampyre-vices—
Beyond where the serpentine river
Curves in a coil gigantic,
And straight, a thin shaft, through the vagueness
Soars the high lighthouse of Paris,
Soars o'er the sea of the city
With all its shoals and its terrors,
Its perilous straits and its breakers,
High o'er the brightness and splendour
Of shores where the sirens sing ever.

Then, shadows enmassed once again :
And the river moving slowly,
And the hills making darkness deeper.
The lamps now fewer and fewer—
Fewer the red lights and yellow,
Till only a dusky barge
Moves like a water snake
On the face of a dark lagoon,
A stealthy fire 'mid the stillness ;
While from a weir in the distance
Comes a sound like the cry of waters
When the tides and the sea winds gather
And the sands of the dunes are scattered
In the scud of the spray.

ROBERT BROWNING

“One who never turned his back but marched breast forward,
Never doubted clouds would break,
Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong would triumph :
Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
Sleep to wake.”

Died at the Palazzo Rezzonico, Venice, December 12, 1889.

So, it is well : what need is there to mourn ?
What of the darkness was there, of the dread,
Of all the pity of old age forlorn
When the swift mind and hand are though as dead ?
Nothing : the change was his that comes to days
When, after long, rich, restful afternoons,
A sudden flush of glory fills the skies :
Thereafter is the peace of dream-fraught
moons,
And then, oh ! then for sure, in the eastern ways
At morn, once more Life’s golden floods
arise.

ROBERT BROWNING

Ay, it is well: what better fate were his?
Why wish for him the twilight-greyness
drear?
He hath not known the bitter thing it is
To halt, and doubt, grope blindly, tremble,
fear:
The reverend snows above his forehead brought
No ominous hints of that which might not
be,
No chill suggestion of the ephemeral
soul:
Unto the very end 'twas his to see
Failure no drear climacteric, but wrought
To nobler issues, a victorious goal.

There where the long lagoons by day and night
Feel the swift journeying tides, in ebb and
flow,
Move inward from the deep with sound and light
And splendour of the seas, or outward go
Resurgent from the city that doth rest
Upon the flood even as a swan asleep,
Or as a lily 'mid encircling streams,
Or as a flower a dusky maid doth keep,
An orient maid, upon her love-warm breast,
Thrilled with its inspiration through her
dreams—

There, in the city that he loved so well,
And with the sea-sound in his ears, the sound
Of healing waters in their miracle

ROBERT BROWNING

Of changeless and regenerative round,
The strange and solemn silence that is death
Came o'er him. 'Mid the loved ones near
 The deep suspense of the last torturing
 hope
Hung like a wounded bird, ere swift and
 sheer
It fall with the last frail exhausted breath
 And feeble fluttering wings that cannot
 ope.

There death was his : within his golden prime,
 Painless, serene, unvanquished, undismayed,
He fronted the dark lapse of mortal time
 With eyes alit, through all the gathering
 shade,
With the strange light that clothes immortal
 things—
 Beauty, and Truth, Faith, Hope, and Joy,
 and Peace,
 The garnered harvest of our human years,
 Fair dreams and hopes that triumphed o'er
 surcease,
The immaculate sweetness of all bygone Springs,
 The rainbow-glory of transfigured tears.

Over him went the Powers, the Dreams, the
 Graces,
 The invisible Dominations that we know
Despite the mystic veil that hides their faces,
 The immortal faces that divinely glow :

ROBERT BROWNING

Fair Hope was there to take him by the hand ;
White Aspirations smiled about his bed ;
Desires and Dreams moved gently by his
side ;
Beauty stooped low, and shone upon the
dead ;
Joy spake not, for, from out the Deathless land,
She led God's loveliest gift, his long-lost
Bride.

Oh, what a trivial mockery then was this,
The change we so involve with alien terror :
How lorn in light of that supernal bliss
The ruinous wrecking folly of our error !
Sweet beyond words the meeting that was there,
Sweet beyond words the deep-set yearning
gaze,
Sweet, sweet the voice that long had
silent been !
Ah, how his soul, beleagured by no maze,
No glooms of Death, i' that Paradisal air
Knew all was well, since She was there,
his Queen.

They are not gone, those Dreams, Fair Hopes,
and Graces,
Those Powers and Dominations and Desires,
They are not passed, though veiled the immortal
faces,
Though dimmed meanwhile their eyes' wild
starry fires.

ROBERT BROWNING

Meanwhile, it may be, on wan wings and slender
Invisible to mortal gaze, they gleam
 In solemn, sad, processional array
There where the sunshafts through stained
 windows stream,
And flood the gloomful majesty with splendour,
 And charm the aisles from out their
 brooding grey.

They are not gone: nor shall they ever vanish,
 Those precious ministers of him, our Poet:
What madness would it be for one to banish,
 To barter his inheritance, forego it,
For some phantasmal gift, some transient boon!
 Thus would it be with us were we to turn
 Indifferently aside, when *they* draw nigh,
To look with callous gaze, nor once discern
How swift they come and go, how all too soon
 They evade for ever the unheeding eye.

They are not gone: for wheresoe'er there liveth
 One hope his song inspired — whom *they*
 inspired—
Yea, wheresoever in one heart there breatheth
 An aspiration by his ardour fired:
Where'er through him are souls made serfs to
 Beauty,
Where'er through him hearts stir with lofty
 aim,
Where'er through him men thrill with
 high endeavour,

ROBERT BROWNING

There shall these ministers breathe low his
name,
Linked to ideals of Love and Truth and Duty,
And all high things of mind and soul,
for ever.

No carven stone, no monumental fane,
Can equal this: that he hath builded deep
A cenotaph beyond the assoiling reign
Of Her whose eyes are dusk with Night and
Sleep,
Queenly Oblivion: no Pyramid,
No vast, gigantic Tomb, no Sepulchre
Made awful with imag'ries of doom,
Evade her hand who one day shall inter
Man's proudest monuments, as she hath hid
The immemorial past within her womb.

For he hath built his lasting monument
Within the hearts and in the minds of men:
The Powers of Life around its base have bent
The Stream of Memory: our furthest ken
Beholds no reach, no limit to its rise:
It hath foundations sure; it shall not pass;
The ruin of Time upon it none shall
see,
Till the last wind shall wither the last grass,
Nay, while man's Hopes, Fears, Dreams, and
Agonies
Uplift his soul to Immortality.

THE MAN AND THE CENTAUR

THE MAN

UPON the mountain-heights thou goest,
As swift as some fierce wind-swept flame ;
Thy doom thou scornest while thou knowest
Men mock thy name.

But thou—thou hast the mountain-splendour,
The lonely streams, blue lakes serene,
Wouldst thou these virgin haunts surrender
For man's demesne ?

Wouldst thou, for peaks where eagles gather,
Where moonwhite skies slow flush with dawn,
Where, drenched with dew thy chieftain-father
Is far withdrawn—

Wouldst thou all these exchange, give over
Thy wild free joys and all delights,
Thy proud and passionate mountain-lover,
Thy starry nights,

THE MAN AND THE CENTAUR

For that drear life in huddled places
Where men like ants move to and fro,
Tired men, with ever on their faces
The shadow of woe ?

THE CENTAUR.

I would not change—did not the waters
Did not the winds, all living things
Proclaim that we, the sons and daughters
Of Time's first kings,

That we must change and pass and perish
Even as autumnal leaves that fall ;
Even as the wind the hill-flowers cherish,
At Winter's call :

That we, even we, should know no morrow,
For as our body, so our soul :
O human, fair thy life of sorrow,
Thou hast a Goal !

DIONYSOS IN INDIA

(Opening Fragment of a Lyrical Drama)

Opening Scene:

Verge of an upland glade among the Himalayas.

Time: Sunrise.

FIRST FAUN.

. . . Hark! I hear

Aerial voices—

SECOND FAUN.

Whist!

FIRST FAUN.

It is the wind
Leaping against the sunrise, on the heights.

SECOND FAUN.

No, no, yon mountain-springs—

FIRST FAUN.

Hark, hark, oh, hark!—

DIONYSOS IN INDIA

SECOND FAUN.

Are budding into foam-flowers : see, they fall
Laughing before the dawn—

FIRST FAUN.

Oh, the sweet music !

CHILD-FAUN.

(Timidly peeping over a cistus, uncurling into blooms.)

Dear brother, say, oh say, what fills the air ?
The leaves whisper, yet is not any wind :
I am afraid.

FIRST FAUN.

Be not afraid, dear child :
There is no gloom.

CHILD-FAUN.

But silence : and—and—then,
The birds have suddenly ceased : and see, a low
The gossamer quivers where my startled hare—
Slipt from my leash—cow'r's 'mid the foxglove-bells,
His eyes like pansies in a lonely wood !
Oh, I am afraid—afraid—though glad :—

SECOND FAUN.

Why glad ?

CHILD-FAUN.

I know not.

DIONYSOS IN INDIA

FIRST FAUN.

Never yet an evil god
Forsook the dusk. Lo ! all our vales are filled
With light : the darkest shimmers in pale blue :
Nought is forlorn : no evil thing goeth by.

SECOND FAUN.

They say—

FIRST FAUN.

What ? who ?

SECOND FAUN.

They of the hills : they say

That a lost god—

FIRST FAUN.

Hush, hush : beware !

SECOND FAUN.

And why ?

There is no god in the blue empty air ?

Where else ?

FIRST FAUN.

There is a lifting up of joy :
The morning moves in ecstasy. Never !
Oh, never fairer morning dawned than this.
Somewhat is nigh !

SECOND FAUN.

May be : and yet I hear
Nought, save day's familiar sounds, nought see
But the sweet concourse of familiar things.

DIONYSOS IN INDIA

FIRST FAUN.

Speak on, though never a single leaf but hears,
And, like the hollow shells o' the twisted nuts
That fall in autumn, aye murmuringly holds
The breath of bygone sound. We know not
when—

To whom—these little wavering tongues betray
Our heedless words, wild wanderers though we be.
What say the mountain-lords ?

SECOND FAUN.

That a lost god
Fares hither through the dark, ever the dark.

FIRST FAUN.

What dark ?

SECOND FAUN.

Not the blank hollows of the night :
Blind is he, though a god : forgotten graves
The cavernous depths of his oblivious eyes.
His face is as the desert, blanched with ruins.
His voice none ever heard, though whispers say
That in the dead of icy winters far
Beyond the utmost peaks we ever climb
It hath gone forth—a deep, an awful woe.

FIRST FAUN.

What seeks he ?

SECOND FAUN.

No one knoweth.

DIONYSOS IN INDIA

FIRST FAUN.

And blind !

Yet a god,

SECOND FAUN.

Ay so : and I have heard beside
That he is not as other gods ; but from vast age—
So vast, that in his youth those hills were wet
With the tossed spume of each returning tide—
He hath lost knowledge of the things that are,
All memory of what was, in that dim Past
Which was old time for him ; and knoweth nought,
Nought feels, but inextinguishable pain.
Titanic woe and burden of long æons
Of unrequited quest.

FIRST FAUN.

But if he be
Of the Immortal Brotherhood, though blind,
How lost to them ?

SECOND FAUN.

I know not, I. 'Tis said—
Lython the Centaur told me in those days
When he had pity on me in his cave
Far up among the hills—that the lost god
Is curs'd of all his kin, and that his curse
Lies like a cloud about their golden home :
So evermore he goeth to and fro—
The shadow of their glory . . .

Ay, he knows
The lost beginnings of the things that are :

DIONYSOS IN INDIA

We are but morning-dreams to him, and Man
But a fantastic shadow of the dawn :
The very Gods seem children to his age,
Who reigned before their birth-throes filled the sky
With the myriad shattered lights that are the stars.

FIRST FAUN.

Where reigned this ancient God ?

SECOND FAUN.

Old Lython said

His kingdom was the Void, where evermore
Silence sits throned upon Oblivion.

FIRST FAUN.

What wants he here ?

SECOND FAUN.

He hateth Helios,

And dogs his steps. None knoweth more.

FIRST FAUN.

Aha !

I heed no dotard god ! Behold, behold,
My ears betrayed me not : Oh, hearken now !

CHILD FAUN.

Brother, O brother, all the birds are wild
With song, and through the sun-splashed wood
there goes
A sound as of a multitude of wings.

DIONYSOS IN INDIA

SECOND FAUN.

The sun, the sun ! the flowers in the grass !
Oh, the white glory !

FIRST FAUN.

'Tis the Virgin God !

Hark, hear the hymns that thrill the winds of morn,
Wild pæans to the light ! The white processionals !
They come ! They come ! . . .

SONNETS

1893

SONNET-SEQUENCE

I

WHERE have I known thee, dear, in what strange
place,

Midst what caprices of our alien fate,
Where have I bowed, worshipping this thy face,
And hunger'd for thee, as now, insatiate?
Tell me, white soul, that through those starry
veils

Keep'st steadfast vigil o'er my wavering spirit,
On what far sea trimm'd we our darkling sails
When fell the shadow o'er that we now inherit?
Two tempest-driven souls were we, or glad
With the young joy that recks of no to-morrow:
Or were we as now inexplicably sad
Before the coming twilight of new Sorrow?
Did our flesh quail as now this poor flesh quails.
Our faces blanch, as mine, as thine that pales!

SONNET-SEQUENCE

II

Out of the valley of the Shadow of Death
Who cometh, through the haunted Hollow Land ?
On those tired lips of mine whose quickening breath,
In this long yearning clasp whose tremulous hand ?
O, is it death or dream, madness, or what
Fantastic torture of the chemic brain,
That brings thee here, as thus, when all forgot,
Thy body sleeps, as mine doth, free from pain ?
What is the brooding word upon thy lips
O beautiful image of my heart's desire ?
What is the ominous shadow of eclipse
That dusks those veilèd eyes' redeeming fire ?
O soul whom I from life to life have sought,
What menace haunteth joy so dearly bought ?

SONNET-SEQUENCE

III

THIS menace :—of remembrance that must come :
This menace :—of the waking that must be.
O soul, let the rhythm of life itself grow dumb
And be the song of death our litany :
Let the world perish as a perishing fire,
For us be less than ashes without flame,
So that we twain our last breath here suspire,
Here where none uttereth word, none calleth
name.

For in the Hollow Land is utter peace
The magic spell which hath no first or last :
But all that never ceaseth here doth cease
And what would know no death is long since
past :
Only one thing endures where all expire—
The inviolate rapture of fulfilled desire.

SONNET-SEQUENCE

IV

WHERE art thou, Love ! Lo, I am crucified
Here on the bitter tree of my suspense,
And my soul travails in my quivering side
Wild with the passionate longing to go hence.
Where would it voyage, lost, bewildered soul
If from the body's warm white home it strayed :
Even as the wild-fox would it find its hole,
Even as the fowls of the air would it find shade ?
Yea, dear, with winnowing wings there would it
 fly
To fold them on the whiteness of thy breast,
And all its passion breathe into thy sigh,
Fulfil the uttermost peace of perfect rest :
And passing into thee as its last goal
Should know no more this bitter-sweet control.

SONNET-SEQUENCE

V

DEAR, through the silence comes a vibrant call,
Thy voice, thy very voice it is, O Sweet !
Yet who shall scale the dread invisible wall
That guards the Eden where our souls would
meet ?

O veil of flesh, O dull mortality,
Is there no vision for the enfranchised eyes :
Must we stoop low thro' Death's green-glooms to
see

The immaculate light known of our wingèd sighs ?
Nay, Love, of body or soul no shadow or gloom
Can always, always, thee and me dispart ;
Soul of my soul, thro' the very gates of Doom
Even as deep to deep, heart crieth to heart—
Yea, as two moving waves on Life's wild sea,
We meet, we merge, we are one, I thou, thou
me !

SONNET-SEQUENCE

VI

“**AND** dost thou love me not a whit the less :
And is thy heart as tremulous as of yore,
And do thine eyes mirror the wonderfulness,
And do thy lips retain their magic lore ?”
What, Sweet, can these things be, ev’n in thy
thought,
And I so briefly gone, so swiftly come ?
Nay, if the pulse of life its beat forgot
This speaking heart would not thereby be dumb.
I love thee, love thee so, O beautiful Hell
That dost consume heart, brain, nerves, body, soul
That even my immortal birthright I would sell
Were Heaven to choose, or Thee, as my one goal.
Sweet love fulfilled, they say, the common lot !
He who speaks thus, of real love knoweth not.

SONNET-SEQUENCE

VII

THE dull day darkens to its close. The sheen
Of a myriad gas-jets lights the squalid night.
There is no joy, it seems, but what hath been :
There is nought left but semblance of delight.
Nay, is it so ? Down this long darkling way
What surety is there for the hungry heart,
What vistas of white peace, rapt holiday
Of the tired soul forlorn, thus kept apart ?
Oh, hearken, hearken, love ! I cannot wait :
Drear is the night without, the night within :
I am so tired, so tired, so baffled of our fate,
The very sport it seems of our sweet sin :
Oh, open, open now, and bid me stay,
Who almost am too tired, too weak, to pray.

SONNET-SEQUENCE

VIII

AND so, is it so ? the long sweet pain is over ?
The dear familiar love must know a change ?
No more am I, no more, to be your lover,
But life be cold once more, and drear, and
strange.

We have sinned, you say, and sorrow must re-
deem

All the cruel largess of our passionate love,
And we, at the last, content us with a dream
Who have known a hell below, a heaven above !
Well, be it so : thy life I shall not darken :
Thy dream, for me, shall be disturbed no more :
Thine ears, by day or night, shall never hearken
The coming of the steps thou loved'st of yore :
And if, afar, a lost wild soul blaspheme,
Thou shalt not know it in thy peace supreme.

AN UNTOLD STORY

I

WHEN the dark falls, and as a single star
The orient planets blend in one bright ray
A-quiver through the violet shadows far
Where the rose-red still lingers 'mid the grey :

And when the moon, half-cirque around her
hollow,
Casts on the upland pastures shimmer of green :
And the marsh-meteors the frail lightnings follow,
And wave laps into wave with amber sheen—

O then my heart is full of thee, who never
From out thy beautiful mysterious eyes
Givest one glance at this my wild endeavour,
Who hast no heed, no heed, of all my sighs :

Is it so well with thee in thy high place
That thou canst mock me thus even to my face ?

AN UNTOLD STORY

II

Dull ash-grey frost upon the black-grey fields :
Thick wreaths of tortured smoke above the town :
The chill impervious fog no foothold yields,
But onward draws its shroud of yellow brown.

No star can pierce the gloom, no moon dispart :
And I am lonely here, and scarcely know
What mockery is “death from a broken heart,”
What tragic pity in the one word : Woe.

But I am free of thee, at least, yea free !
No more thy bondager 'twixt heaven and hell !
No more there numbs, no more there shroudeth me
The paralysing horror of thy spell :

No more win'st thou this last frail worshipping
breath,
For twice dead he who dies this second death.

THE VEILS OF SILENCE

THREE veils of Silence, Summer draws apace.
The noon-tide Peace that broods on hill and dale,
That passes o'er the sea and leaves no trace,
That sleeps in the moveless clouds' moveless trail :

The wave of colour deepening day by day,
The yellow grown to purple on the leas,
Blue within there beyond the dusky ways ;
A green-gloom dusk within the grass-green trees.

The third veil no man sees. She weaves it where
Beneath the fret and fume tired hearts aspire
And long for some divine impossible air.

Out of Man's heart she weaves this veil of Rest—
Sweet anodyne for all the feverish quest
And ache of inarticulate Desire.

WRITTEN BY THE SEA

SWEET are white dreams i' the dusk, yet sweeter
far

When the sea-music fills those haunting dreams :
When light survives alone in each white star
And in the far white shine of a myriad gleams :
When from white flowers, that through the violet
gloom

Shine faintly phosphorescent, strange breaths steal
And in the lamp-lit silence of the room
The longing, yearning soul makes mute appeal :
When nought is heard, and yet the tired hands
stray

To meet white dream-like hands soft floating by :
When the disanchor'd mind sails far away
Mid the suspense of an imagined sigh—
'Tis thee, 'tis thee, O dear white soul, 'tis thee,
White Joy, white Peace, white Balm that healeth
me !

THE MENACE OF AUTUMN

AMBER and yellow and russet, gold and red,
The autumnal leaves dream they are summer
flowers :

Day after day the windless sunny hours
With feet of flame pass softly overhead :

Day after day over each perishing leaf
The windless hours pass with slow-fading flame :
No song is heard where floods of music came ;
Long garner'd on the fields the final sheaf.

One day a wild and ravishing wind will rise,
One day a paralysing frost will come,
And all this glory be taken unaware :

Dark branches then will lean against the skies,
Sear leaves will drift the forest-pathways dumb,
And wold and woodland lie, austere and bare.

AFTERMATH

THE herald redbreast sings his winter lays,
The fieldfares drift in flocks adown the weald :
The turbulent rooks gather on every field,
And clamorous starlings dare our garden-ways :

O beautiful garden ways, not grown less dear
Because the rose has gone, and briony waves
Where lily and purple iris have their graves,
Or that, where violets were, the asters rear.

Lo, what a sheen of colour lingers still,
Though the autumnal rains and frost be come :
The tall dishevelled sunflowers, stooping spill
Lost rays of sunshine o'er the tangled mould,
While everywhere, touched with a glory of gold,
Flaunts the imperial chrysanthemum.

FLORA IN JANUARY

THE goddess slept. About her where she lay
Dead pansies, fragrant still, and the myriad rose :
Adream 'mid the fallen drift, she woke one day,
And the blooms stirred, seeing her eyes unclose.

The oaks and beeches stood in disarray,
Gaunt, spectral, dark, in dismal phantom rows ;
She smiled, and there was a shimmer 'mid the
grey
And sudden fall of the first winter-snows.

But when, tired with the icy blossoms of the air,
She slept once more, and all the snow was over,
She dreamed of Spring and saw his sunlit hair,
And heard the whisper of her laughing lover :
But while she dreamed, the dead blooms had
grown fair
And Christmas-roses made a veil above her.



POEMS

1893-1905



THE COMING OF LOVE

IN and out the osier beds, all along the shallows
Lifts and laughs the soft south wind, or swoons
among the grasses.

But ah, whose following feet are these that bend
the mauve marsh-mallows,

Who laughs so low and sweet?—who sighs—and
passes?

Flower of my heart, my darling, why so slowly
Lift'st thou thine eyes to mine, deep wells of
gladness?

Too deep this new-found joy, and this new pain
too holy—

Or is there dread in thy heart of this divinest
madness?

Who sighs with longing there?—who laughs alone—
and passes?

Whose following feet are these that bend the
mauve marsh-mallows?

THE COMING OF LOVE

Who comes upon the wind that stirs the heavy
seeding grasses,
In and out the osier beds, and hither through the
shallows ?

Flower of my heart, my dream—who whispers
near so gladly ?

Whose is the golden sunshine-net o'erspread for
capture ?

Lift, lift thine eyes to mine who love so wildly,
madly—

Those eyes of brave desire, deep wells o'erbrimmed
with rapture !

FROM OVERSEA

FROM oversea—

Violets for memories,
I send to thee,

Let them bear thoughts of me,
With pleasant memories
To touch the heart of thee,
Far oversea.

A little way it is for love to flee,
Love wing'd with memories,
Hither to thither oversea.

THE WHITE FLOWERS OF JANUARY

“The aconites, and other white flowers of January, the spirits of the dead blooms of summer.”—H. P. SIWÄRMILL.

THE woodland ways were white : the boughs swung
low

With weight of snow :
There was a shimmer of dancing golden light,
And through the glow
The goddess Flora moved in sudden flight.

But when she saw the dead blooms everywhere
Laid low i’ the mould,
Her sunny wings she did enfold.

Long did she brood amid that woodland bare
And the blooms wither’d there.

Then with a smile she called the snows to her
There was a stir
A falling rustle, as when bird-wings whirr
Aloud i’ the thickets in the twilight hour :
And next, a glimmering shower.

Swift mid the green-gloom fleckt with white, she
fled :

But where each snowflake fell
There was a happy miracle :
Dead pansies, wind-flowers, violets, once more rose,
But now in white each petal did unclose.

THE LUTE-PLAYER

O DAY, come unto me,
Fair and so sweet !
Crown'd shalt thou be,
And with wing'd feet
Escape the invading sea,
Whose bitter line
Follows o'erfleet.
What joy thou would'st is thine :
Life is divine,
O Fair and Sweet !

Death is a paltry thought :
A little troublous thing—
An insect's sting !
Beautiful Day, oh, heed it not !
Surely I hear the rumour of thy feet,
And Death is vain—draw near, draw
near !—
Alas ! and is it so ? Farewell, O Fair and
Sweet,
For Death is here.

WHITE VIOLETS

WHITE dreams,
White thoughts,
White hopes !
Shy violets,
White violets,
In woodland ways, by the brook side, on
the hill-slopes !

Strange joys,
New thrills,
Vague fears :
Violets,
White violets,
White kisses from the lips of Spring, white
dewy tears.

White hands,
O lead me where
The white Spring strays
'Mid violets,
White violets,
On the hill-slopes, by the brook side, in
woodland ways.

THE SUN LORD

Low laughing, blithely scorning—
Beware, beware, of flaming wings,
Love hunts thee down the morning !

His white feet dip i' the hillside springs,
He mocks thy flying terror !
The woodland with his laughter rings !

He'll make thee his slave to follow,
Nor shall he forgive thee, maid, thine error,
Who spied thee hid in the hollow.

Too late, too late the warning !
Behold the flash of flaming wings—
Love hath thee now i' the morning !

THE SUMMER WOMAN

O wild bee humming in the gorse,
O wild dove croodling in the woods,
Know ye not she is false as fair,
A sweet Caprice with bitter moods ?

For bitter-sweet her wild kiss is,
And bitter-sweet her haunting voice :
How oft my eyes have filled with tears
When she hath bid me to rejoice !

O loved Caprice, is thine the fault
Or is the bitterness all mine ?
Art thou the quenchless Thirst of Joy
And I the lees of thy spilt wine ?

Oh, greenness, greenness everywhere,
Oh, whisper of green leaves, green grass,
Surely the glory is not gone,
Surely the glory shall not pass ?

I long for some lost magic thing,
A voice, a gleam, a joy, a pain :
Wild doves, your old-time strain once more,
Wild bees, wild bees, come back again !

SYCAMORES IN BLOOM

LIKE flame-wing'd harps the seed blooms lie
Amid the shadowy sycamores.
The music of each leaflet's sigh
Thrills them continually,
The small harps of the sycamores.

Small birds innumerable find rest
And shelter 'midst the sycamores.
Their songs (of love in a warm soft nest)
Are faintly echoed east and west
By the red harps o' the sycamores.

The dewfall and the starshine make
Amidst the shadowy sycamores
Sweet delicate strains ; the gold beams shake
The leaves at morn, and swift awake
The small harps of the sycamores.

O sweet Earth's music everywhere,
Though faint as in the sycamores :
Sweet when buds burst, birds pair ;
Sweet when as thus there wave in the air
The red harps of the sycamores.

THE NORLAND WIND

THE south wind on the hill,
And the west wind on the lea,
But better than these I love
The north wind on the sea !

For the north wind on the sea
Is fearless and elate:
The ocean vast and free
Is not more great.

On the hill the south wind laughs
Where the blue cloud-shadows flee :
The west wind takes the mead
With a ripple of glee :

But the north wind on the deep
Is the wind of winds for me,
Spirit of dauntless life
And Lord of Liberty !

SPRING'S ADVENT

THE Spirit of Spring is in the air ;
The daffodils wave blithe and free
To the wind's minstrelsy,
And everywhere
A green rebirth involves each branchlet bare.

Already from the elm-tree boughs
The jubilant thrush doth cry aloud ;
From fallow fields new ploughed
The plovers rouse ;
In hollow boles no more the squirrels drowse.

The blackbird calls his thrilling note ;
And by each field, and copse, and glade
The leverets race, the rabbits raid ;
Where gorse-blooms float
The yellow-yite pipes o'er and o'er by rote.

In the blue arch of sky, cloud-swept,
The unseen larks are singing ;
The green grass is springing :
While nature slept,
Leaf-crown'd, bird-haunted Spring hath hither leapt.

SPRING'S ADVENT

O joy of winds, and birds, and flowers,
Of growing grass, of budding leaves,
Of green and sappy sheaves,
Of rustling showers,
Sunshine, and plenitude of marvellous hours.

Thrilled Earth beholds her golden prime
Returned again ; her heart beats swift.
Low-laughing, as the spring winds lift
Their songs sublime,
Mocking, she dares the circling Shadow of Time.

THE SUMMER WIND

THE bugling of the summer wind
Is sweet upon the hill :
I love to hear its eddies
The heather-crannies fill.

It plays upon the bracken
A blithe fanfaronade :
And thro' the moss-cups whistleth
“ The Fairy Raid.”

It leaps from birch to rowan,
And laugheth long and loud,
Then with a spring is vanished,
And rideth on a cloud !

THE HILL WATER

THERE is a little brook,
I love it well :
It hath so sweet a sound
That even in dreams my ears could tell
Its music anywhere.
Often I wander there,
And leave my book
Unread upon the ground,
Eager to quell
In the hush'd air
That haunts its flowing forehead fair
All that about my heart hath wound
A trouble of care :
Or, it may be, idly to spell
Its runic music rare
And with its singing soul to share
Its ancient lore profound :
For sweet it is to be the echoing shell
That lists and inly keeps that murmurous miracle.

THE HILL WATER

About it all day long
In this June-tide
There is a myriad song.
From every side
There comes a breath, a hum, a voice :
The hill-wind fans it with a pleasant noise
As of sweet rustling things
That move on unseen wings,
And from the pinewood near
A floating whisper oftentimes I hear,
As when, o'er pastoral meadows wide,
Stealeth the drowsy music of a weir.
The green reeds bend above it,
The soft green grasses stoop and trail therein :
The minnows dart and spin:
The purple-gleaming swallows love it :
And, hush, its innermost depth within,
The vague prophetic murmur of the lime.

But not in summer-tide alone
I love to look
Upon this rippling water in my glen :
Most sweet, most dear, my brook,
And most my own,
When the grey mists shroud every ben,
And in its quiet place
The stream doth bare her face,
And lets me pore deep down into her eyes,
Her eyes of shadowy grey,
Wherein from day to day

THE HILL WATER

My soul is startled with a new surmise,
Or doth some subtler meaning trace
Reflected from unseen invisible skies.

Dear mountain-solitary, dear lonely brook,
Of hillside rains and dews the vagrant daughter,
Sweet, sweet, thy music when I bend above thee,
When in thy fugitive face I look ;
Yet not the less I love thee,
When, far away, and absent from thee long,
I yearn, my dark hill-water,
I yearn, I strain to hear thy song,
Brown, wandering water,
Dear, murmuring water !

RAINBOW-SHIMMER

TO-DAY upon the hillside
I saw a golden fairy;
Her name is Rainbow-Shimmer,
But for you and me she's Mary.

For Mary is the mother
Of all sweet souls that be,
From the angels in heaven
To the best fish in the sea.

And of all sweet souls that are,
Fairies are the rarest,
And Mary was a star
Among the fairest.

She had a golden kingcup
Her little golden head,
For dress she had a daisy white
Just tipped with red.

She danced upon a clover leaf
Still ashine with dew
And the blue sky above was not
As her blue eyes so blue.

RAINBOW-SHIMMER

Her partner was a sunbeam,
A partner wild and wary,
Whose reel might even tire
The patience of a fairy.

Ah, how the two went dancing
Among the dewy clover ;
I would that you were Mary
And I your sunbeam lover !

“Stop, Mary, stop,” I whispered,
“Be not so wild and wary,
I know a little lassie
Who’d dearly love a fairy !”

But in a twink she vanished,
The dewshine dance was over !
Ah, her twinkling laughter
With her sunbeam lover !

But, hush ! Her hiding-place
Is not so far apart :
I’ll tell you where it is, dear,
Its deep in Mother’s heart.

THE YELLOWHAMMER'S SONG

Out on the waste, a little lonely bird, I flit and I sing;
My breast is yellow as sunshine, and light as the wind my wing.

The golden gorse me shelters, in the tufted grass is my nest,
And *Sweet, sweet, sweet the world*, though the wind blow east or west.

The harebells chime their music, the canna floats white in the breeze:
But as for me, I flit to and fro and I sing at my ease.

When the thyme is dripping with dew, and the hill-wind beareth along
The pungent scent of the gale, loudly I sing my morning song.

When the sun beats on the gorse, the broom, and the budding heather,
I flit from spray to spray, and my song is of the golden weather.

THE YELLOWHAMMER'S SONG

When the moor-fowl sink to their rest, and the
sky is soft rose-red,
I sing of the crescent moon and the single star
overhead.

Out on the waste, out on the waste, I flit all day
as I sing,
*Sweet, sweet, sweet is the world—dear world—how
beautiful everything!*

Only a little lonely bird that loveth the moorland
waste,
And little perhaps of the joy of the world is that
which I taste ;

But out on the wild, free moorlands or the gold
gorse-bows I swing,
And *Sweet, sweet, sweet the world ; oh, sweet ! ah,
sweet !* the song that I sing.

VESPER

THE wind of evening stealeth hushfully
Where the high poplar trees gleam silver-grey :
Born of the quiet hour, the sleep o' the day,
Old memories throng upon me mournfully.

Against the paling width of the clear sky
The dark-green hill inclines its tree-clad height ;
The air is full of vaporous, tender light,
The solitude is broken by no cry.

The green-gold disc of the moon doth slowly rise
Out of the dusk whence sounds the *Angelus* ;
O memories of hours long lost to us !
Oh, bitterness of unavailing sighs !

THE SONG OF THE SEA-WIND

King of the winds, O Wind of the Sea,
When thou sweepest abroad thy voice crieth,
Crieth the anguish of living souls
As with the wild storm-rapt soughing of the oaks.

*Breath of the world, O bitter breath,
King of the winds, O Wind of the Sea !*

King of the winds, O Wind of the Sea,
Hitherward blow, by our doors, through our souls.
Blow, blow, Eurocyldon . . . and as dead leaves
Whirl seaward vain hopes and perishing dreams.

*Breath of the world, O bitter breath,
King of the winds, O Wind of the Sea !*

King of the winds, O Wind of the Sea,
Uplift us, resurge us out with thy waves,
Out on thine infinite heaving breast
Where not a wave breaks but is higher than hope.

*Breath of the world, O bitter breath,
King of the winds, O Wind of the sea !*

THE SONG OF THE SEA-WIND

King of the winds, O Wind of the Sea,
In the sweep and shadow of mighty wings
Whirl far this Dream that is life, afar
To the Shores of Joy or the Coasts of Night.

*Breath of the worlds, O bitter breath,
King of the winds, O Wind of the Sea !*

King of the winds, O Wind of the Sea,
Before thee my heart bows, for it may be that
God—
Yea, that it is Thee, O God, who passeth by,
Voicing Thy Word to our souls out of infinite
space—

*Eternal Breath, O bitter-sweet Breath,
Lord of all winds, O Wind of the Sea !*

THE BALLAD OF THE RAM.

Who 'as 'eard the Ram a-callin' on the green
fields o' the sea,
Let 'em wander east or west an' mighty fast :
For it's bad to 'ear the Ram when he's up an'
runnin' free
With the angry bit o' ribbon at the mast.

It's rush an' serge an' dash when the Ram is on
the leap,
But smash an' crash for them as stops the way :
The biggest ship goes down right there that ain't
got sense to keep
The shore-walk o' the werry nearest bay.

For Frenchy ships, an' German too, an' Russian,
you may bet,
It's safer for to land an' 'ome by tram,
Than out to come an' gallivant an' risk the kind
o' wet
That follers runnin' counter to a Ram.

THE BALLAD OF THE RAM

For when the *Terror* lifts 'is 'ead an' goes for
wot is near,
I'm sorry for them ships wot sail so free ;
It's best to up an' elsewhere, an' be werry far
from 'ere
When Rams 'ave took to bleatin' on the sea !

CAP'N GOLDSACK

Down in the yellow bay where the scows are
sleeping,

Where among the dead men the sharks flit to
and fro—

There Cap'n Goldsack goes, creeping, creeping,
creeping,

Looking for his treasure down below !

Yeo, yeo, heave-a-yeo !

Creeping, creeping, creeping down below—

Yo ! ho !

Down among the tangleweed where the dead are
leaking

With the ebb an' flow o' water through their
ribs an' hollow bones,

Isaac Goldsack stoops a low, seeking, seeking,
seeking.

What's he seeking there amidst a lot o' dead
men's bones ?

Yeo, Yeo, heave-a-yeo !

Seeking, seeking, seeking down below—

Yo ! ho !

CAP'N GOLDSACK

Twice a hundred year an' more are gone across
the bay,

Down across the yellow bay where the dead are
sleeping :

But Cap'n Goldsack gropes an' gropes from year-
long day to day—

Cap'n Goldsack gropes below, creeping, creep-
ing, creeping :

Yeo, Yeo, heave-a-yeo !

Creeping, creeping, creeping down below—

Yo ! ho !

A CAVALRY CATCH

Up ! for the bugles are calling,
Saddle, to boot, and away !
Sabres are clanking, and lances are glancing,
The colonel is swearing and horses are prancing,
So up with the sabres and lances,
Up and away !

Where are we off to, say ?
Saddle, and boot, and away !
With a thunder of hoofs in a rush we go past,
In a whirlwind of dust we are gone as a blast—
For we're off with the sabres and lances,
Off and away !

SPANISH ROSES

Roses, roses,
Yellow and red ;
A rose for the living,
A rose for the dead !
Who'll sip their dew ?
There are only a few
Of the yellow and red :
Youth sells its roses
Ere youth is sped.

Roses, roses,
All for delight ;
What of the night ?
Hark, the tramp, tramp,
The scabbard's clamp,
The flaring lamp !
Where is the morning dew ?
Ah, only a few
Drank ere the yellow and red
Lay shrivelled, shrivelled,
Over the dead.

SPANISH ROSES

Roses, roses,
Buy, oh buy.
The years fly,
'Tis the time of roses.
Here are posies
For one and all,
For lovers that sigh
And for lovers that die:
And for Love's pall
And burial !

Roses, roses, roses, buy, buy, oh buy !
Why delay, why delay, roses also die.
Pink and yellow, blood-red, snow-white,
Roses for dayspring, roses for night !

Buy, buy, oh my roses buy !
A kiss for a kiss, and a sigh for a sigh !

THE SEA-BORN VINE

(A Dionysiac Legend)

THE sun leapt up the rose-flushed sky
And yellowed all the sea's pale blue ;
The Tyrrhene crew
Uprose and hailed the God on high.

But Dionysos made no sign :
The shipmen hailed their Lord again,
Acclaimed His reign,
Then stared upon their guest divine.

“The deep shall swallow thee, fair sir :
The sea-things shall make thee their prey—
The God obey
Or meet swift death ere thou canst stir !”

“*Ere ye arose, my spirit bowed
To the Great God unrisen then :—
Take heed, O men,
Your clamour grow not overloud.*”

THE SEA-BORN VINE

“A priest of Bacchus thou ! Behold :
One sea-wave here could whelm thy God—
His mystic rod
Would float foam-crown’d ’mid this wave-gold.

“*Ai Evoë !* thy voice might fill
The waste of sea, the waste of sky,
Yet thou wouldst die,
Thy god supine on some green hill !”

Ai Evoë ! the cry thrilled wide :
The startled rowers shrank—they saw
With trembling awe
The conscious waters surge aside.

Ai Evoë ! The waves turn green ;
In tendril masses twist and twine :
A mighty vine
Uprises and o’erhead doth lean :

Ai Evoë ! The tendrils cling
About the shipmen as they swim :
The Bacchic hymn
The waves chant and the wild winds sing.

Evoë ! Dionysos cries,
The seamen and the boat no more
The shingly shore
Shall feel ’neath known or alien skies.

THE SEA-BORN VINE

Blue dolphins guide the wave-born vine
To caves near mystic Ind :
Only the wind
Murmurs for aye the tale divine.

Ye who deride the gods, beware :
They are with us evermore ; they brook
No scornful look ;
Their vengeance fills our mortal air.

Yea, of the jealous gods, take heed :
One day the earth or sea shall ope
And vanquish hope—
An *Evoë* be vain indeed !

VENILIA

“Exspirare rosas, decrescere lilia vidi” . . .

—CLAUDIAN.

ALONG the faint shores of the foamless gulf
I see pale lilies droop, wan roses fall,
And Silence stilling the uplifted wave.

And in the movement of the uplifted wave,
And ere the rose fall, or the lily breathe,
Silence becomes a lonely voice, like hers,
Venilia's, who when love was given wings
And far off flight, mourned ceaseless as a dove,
Till bitter Circe made her but a voice
Still lingering as a fragrance in dimwoods
When on the gay wind swims the yellow leaf.

ON A NIGHTINGALE IN APRIL

THE yellow moon is a dancing phantom
Down secret ways of the flowing shade ;
And the waveless stream has a murmuring whisper
Where the alders wave.

Not a breath, not a sigh, save the slow stream's
whisper :
Only the moon is a dancing blade
That leads a host of the Crescent warriors
To a phantom raid.

Out of the Lands of Faerie a summons,
A long, strange cry that thrills through the
glade :—
The grey-green glooms of the elm are stirring,
Newly afraid.

Last heard, white music, under the olives
Where once Theocritus sang and played—
Thy Thracian song is the old new wonder
O moon-white maid !

THE DIRGE OF THE REPUBLIC

(*In Memoriam*.—E.Z.)

In the great days men heard afar the clarions of
Hope rejoice :

The hearts of men were shaken as reeds by the
wind of a Voice.

But now the roll of muffled drums drowns 'mid
the last Retreat

The wild fanfare of perishing hopes, the tramp
of passing feet.

The winds of heaven are banners lost, are pennons
of dismay ;

The innumerable legion of the sun toils on in
disarray ;

The moon that carries freight of gold to ransom
forth the morn

Sails desolate beneath a myriad starry eyes of
scorn.

Wild rhetoric, yes : but who shall say what meta-
phors of pain

Are fit for the funeral dirge of a Republic slain ?
High hopes, faiths, dreams, great passions, aspira-
tions,

Prove but the trodden, useless, bitter dust of weary
nations !

THE DIRGE OF THE REPUBLIC

That which was great is fallen, that which was high is low :

The rising star has sunk again, but in a blood-red glow :

The hundred thousand souls that died before the golden prime

Did well, for it is well to miss the Ironies of Time.

Faith, Honour, Love, the Noble and the True,
These lofty words are pawns of an ignoble crew :
How better far to light the Torch with flames of cheap desire

Than thus to mock the eyes of man with stolen fire !

There is no State broad-based enough upon the People's heart

That some day may not hunted be by the People's dart :

The rebel nerves, the rebel lusts, the rebel hounds of life—

If these be loosened from the whip they turn to fratricidal strife.

Is this the end of all high dreams above thrones trampled under ?

Is this the tinsel chorus left after the noble thunder ?

'Twere better, then, than thus to live, thus forfeit high renown,

To be true men, and free, "beneath the shadow of a Crown" !

INTO THE SILENCE

(A Death in the West Highlands)

UNGATHER'D lie the peats upon the moss ;
No more is heard the shaggy pony's hoof ;
The thin smoke curls no more above the roof ;
Unused the brown-sailed boat doth idly toss
At anchor in the Kyle ; and all across
The strath the collie scours without reproof ;
The gather'd sheep stand wonderingly aloof ;
And everywhere there is a sense of loss.

“ Has Sheumais left for over sea ? Nay, sir,
A se’nnight since a gloom came over him ;
He sicken’d, and his gaze grew vague and dim ;
Three days ago we found he did not stir.
He has gone into the Silence. ‘ Neath yon fir
He lies, and waits the Lord in darkness grim.”

THE HILL-ROAD TO ARDMORE

THERE's the hill-road to Ardmore, Mary,
Here's the glen-road to Ardstrae :
Your home is younder, Mary,
And mine lies this way.

Will you come by the glen, Mary,
Or go the hill-road to Ardmore ?
It is now and as you will, Mary,
For I will ask no more.

'Tis but a score years, Mary,
Since I bade you to Ardstrae ;
And now you are not there, Mary,
Nor walk the hill-side way.

Is it only a score years, Mary,
Since we parted by the shore,
And I watched you go, Mary,
By the hill-road to Ardmore ?

WHITE ROSE

FAR in the inland valleys
The Spring her secret tells ;
The roses lift on the bushes,
The lilies shake their bells.

To a lily of the valley
A white rose leans from above :
“ Little white flower o’ the valley,
Come up and be my love.”

To the lily of the valley
A speedwell whispers, “ No !
Where the roses live are thorns,
’Tis safe below.”

The lily clomb to the rose-bush,
A thorn in her side :
The white rose had wedded a red rose,
And the lily died.

ECHOES OF JOY

ONLY a song of joy
Wind-blown over the heather,
Somewhere two little hearts
Thrill and throb together.

Ah, far mid the nethermost spheres
Life and Death live together ;
And deep is their love, without tears,
For they laugh at the shadows of years—
And yet there rings in my ears
Only a song of joy
Wind-blown over the heather.

WHEN THE GREENNESS IS COME AGAIN

THE west wind lifts the plumes of the fir,
The west wind swings on the pine ;
In the sun-and-shadow the cushats stir ;
For the breath of Spring is a wine
 That fills the wood,
 That thrills the blood,
When the glad March sun doth shine,
 Once more,
When the glad March sun doth shine.

When the strong May sun is a song, a song,
 A song in the good green world,
Then the little green leaves wax long
 And the little fern-fronds are uncurl'd ;
 The banners of green are all unfurl'd,
And the wind goes marching along, along
The wind goes marching along
 The good green world.

A HAZARD OF LOVE

I COUNT my gain a loss,
If that should be to thee
The shadow of a cross
On thy felicity.

But if, dear saint, there be
In loss of mine thy gain,
How sweet it were for me
To please thee with my pain !

Let, then, my loss be thine,
My loss thy gain, sweet nun ;
Yet, dear, were 't not divine
If gain and loss were one ?

THE HONEYMOON ROSE

To pluck the wild rose in the morning dew,
And dream of another Rose to wear it soon . . .
Oh ! will she never come ?—the morn's half through,
And dews don't keep until the afternoon !
Sweetheart, do you wish that roses only grew
In secret places in the dusks of June ?

Ah ! here's my dew-wet Rose,
Since here are you,
Rose of my Honeymoon !

IT HAPPENED IN MAY

A MAID forsaken

A white prayer offered

Under the snow of the apple-blossom :

To whom was it proffered ?

By whom was it taken ?

Well, I suppose

Nobody knows.

But somehow, the snows

Of the apple-blossom

Were changed one day.

A kiss was offered,

A kiss was taken :

And lo ! when the maiden looked shyly away,

Of bloom of the apple the boughs were for-
saken !

But whiter and sweeter grew orange-blossom !

Now this is quite true, I say,

And it happened in May.

NIGHTINGALE LANE

Down through the thicket, out of the hedges,
A ripple of music singeth a tune . . .
 Like water that falls
 From mossy ledges
With a soft low croon :
 Soon
 It will cease !
No, it falls but to rise—but to rise—but to rise !
It is over the thickets, it leaps in the trees,
 It swims like a star in the purple-black skies !
 Ah, once again,
 With its rapture and pain,
The nightingale singeth under the moon !

BLOSSOM OF SNOW

“SING a song of blossom,”
Said little Marjory Brown :
“Why won’t it come down,
Here in the town,
Please?”
Said little Marjory Brown.

“Please,
Wind, blow just a breath, for me
To see
The great white apple-blossoms blow
Just like snow—
Just like snow in our garden before we
Came back to town,”
Said little Marjory Brown.

All day and all night
A wind did blow,
Marjory laughed at the flying snow
And its whirling riot :
But at dawn she grew wan and white,
And was quiet.
And the doctor said,
With his hand on a bowed sobbing head,
“Too late you came up to town
With little Marjory Brown.”

THE DANDELION

A THOUSAND poets have sung the Rose,
 The daisy white, the heather,
The green grass we lie on
 In summer weather . . .
Of almost every flower that grows,
 But never of the Dandelion,
That the winds of Spring have scattered hither
 and thither !

Is there any more fair to see
 Than this bright fellow
Who, also, "takes the winds of March with
 beauty" ?
True his coat is a vulgar yellow,
 And his is a very humble duty . . .
 Merely to be
As joyous as a wave on the sea,
 A wave dancing on the great sea,—
Merely to be bright, sunshiny, glad, strong, and
 free,
As free as a beggar, as proud as a king !

And so, quite as good as the Rose,
 The daisy white, the heather,
 The green grass we lie on
 In summer weather,
Is that flame of the feet of Spring,
 The Dandelion !

THE DREAM-WIND

(Written for Music)

WHEN, like a sleeping child
Or a bird in the nest,
The day is gathered
To the earth's breast . . .
Hush! . . . 'tis the Dream-Wind,
Breathing peace,
Breathing rest,
Out of the Gardens of Sleep in the West.

Oh, come to me, wandering
Wind of the West!
Grey doves of slumber
Come hither to rest! . . .
Hush! . . . now the wings cease
Below the dim trees . . .
And the White Rose of Rest
Breathes low in the Gardens of Sleep in the
West.

TRIAD

FROM the Silence of Time, Time's Silence borrow.
In the heart of To-day is the word of To-morrow.
The Builders of Joy are the Children of Sorrow.

IN MEMORIAM

(To Walt Whitman)

He laughed at Life's Sunset Gates
With vanishing breath :
Glad soul, who went with the Sun
To the Sunrise of Death.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

PRS
545565
1909

WORKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR
AS WILLIAM SHARP

ROMANTIC BALLADS. *Walter Scott.*

VISTAS: Dramatic Interludes. *D. Nutt.*

HEINE, LIFE OF.

SHELLEY, LIFE OF.

BROWNING, LIFE OF.

ECCE PUELLA. *Elkin Matthews.*

A FELLOW AND HIS WIFE. *Harpers.*

MADGE O' THE POOL. *A. Constable.*

WIVES IN EXILE. } *Grant Richards.*

SILENCE FARM. }

LITERARY GEOGRAPHY. *Pall Mall Publications.*

AS FIONA MACLEOD

PHARAIS. *N. T. Foulis.*

THE IMMORTAL HOUR. *N. T. Foulis.*

FROM THE HILLS OF DREAM. *Heinemann.*

THE MOUNTAIN LOVERS. *John Lane.*

THE DOMINION OF DREAMS. *A. Constable.*

WINGED DESTINY. *Chapman & Hall.*

THE WASHER OF THE FORD. *D. Nutt.*

BARBARIC TALES. *D. Nutt.*

SPIRITUAL TALES. *D. Nutt.*

TRAGIC ROMANCES. *D. Nutt.*

WHERE THE FOREST MURMURS. *Newnes.*

THE IMITATION OF CHRIST

NOW FOR THE FIRST TIME FAITHFULLY
RENDERED IN ENGLISH, AFTER THE
MANNER IN WHICH IT WAS WRITTEN

BY

THOMAS A. KEMPIST

Translated, with an Introduction, by
"A Clerk of Oxenford."

Preface by the late Canon H. P. LIDDON, D.D.

"The mind is led by the poetical arrangement to dwell with a new intelligence and intensity upon clauses and words, and to discern with new eyes their deeper meanings, their relation to each other, and to the whole of which they are parts."—*From the Preface.*

The great difference, however, which distinguishes this edition from all others (and which is the *raison d'être*) is the rhythmic form which it takes from the original, by which the reader understands more fully the spirit and meaning of the author.

CHEAP EDITION, New Style, for the Pocket,
Foolscap 8vo, Clear Type, Handsome Cloth
Binding, Gilt Top, Silk Register, 2s. *net* (*post
free*, 2s. 3d.).

Foolscap 8vo, Cloth 4s. 6d.

„ „ Lambskin, gilt top . . . 5s. *net.*

Crown 8vo, Cloth 6s. „

Special Bindings for Presentation—

Crown 8vo, 7s. 6d., 8s. 6d., 10s. 6d., 12s. 6d.,
14s. 6d., and 21s. *net each.*

LONDON: ELLIOT STOCK, 62, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.



PR 5354
S 65
1909



